First (1st) Sitting of the Twenty - Sixth (26th) Meeting of the First Session of the Thirteenth (13th) Legislature

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

30 JULY 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable members, this Honourable Parliament now resumes its sitting. Please be seated. Honourable members, prior to our break, we were debating the Supplementary Appropriation 2026-2027 Bill 2026, and we will now proceed with the debate. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

PRAYER

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good morning. I call this first sitting of the 26th meeting of the First Session of the 13th Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, held on Thursday 30 July 2026 at the Honourable N.J.S. Francis Building, Pond Street, Grand Turk, to order. Honourable Members, I call on our Chaplain, Bishop Coleta Williams III, to pray for this Parliament.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you, to the amazing people of Leeward and Long Bay, and to the strangers in the gallery. We want to give a warm welcome to Jamell Robinson Jr., also known as Jay, who is here in the Chamber and is a proud member of the Leeward and Long Bay community.

Let us welcome him. I also want to welcome my Executive Administrator. This is her first time in Parliament, so Ms. Tamara Hanfield-Jolly, welcome to Parliament. Of course, the rest of our executive team, our Permanent Secretary and our Deputy Secretary, Ms. Keisha Taylor, are here for the Ministry of Home Affairs. Mr. Speaker, I have two roles today. I appreciate that I may have only one set of 20 minutes, but I am also the Acting Minister for Education and Culture. If we know the Minister of Education and Culture, I have been given my talking points to make sure I explain what is in the budget that touches on her Ministry.

So I get a second chance to walk back to a happy time when I served in the Turks and Caicos Islands Government as Minister of Education. Before we go there, Mr. Speaker, I must extend heartfelt condolences to all the bereaved families across the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to give further condolences to the family of the late Mary A. Forbes Missick, also known as Ma May. There is no secret to that, Mr. Speaker. Ma May was my godmother, and I had the honour and privilege to grow up around her, and to be spoiled by her and Uncle Storm when he was alive.

To my extended family of Bridget, Hillary, Holly, Keisha, Catherine Ann, Daphne, T'Ann, Darnell and Trevor, because that was our little group when I was there, Mr. Speaker, may the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. As it was said, if love could have saved her, she would be here today. Mr. Speaker, I am going to touch briefly on Home Affairs because I want to respond to some of the concerns raised by the Leader of the Opposition as it relates to the funding for culture.

It is said that good governance lives in the headlines, and I have always believed that great governance, Mr. Speaker, lives in the fine print. I am a lawyer; you know I can read everything that comes across my desk. So, Mr. Speaker, I will raise the fine print of what this supplementary appropriation is seeking to do and how it impacts the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Earlier this year, during the global budget, the approved estimates were $8.8 million. The supplementary adjusts this variation downward by $291,666.38, producing revised estimates of $8.5 million. It is a reduction, Mr. Speaker, but let us be clear: not a single service to the public will be diminished in this Ministry, despite someone opposite me trying to sound the alarm that things are being defunded. I think I heard defund the police, defund immigration, defund education. I was sitting over here thinking, intelligence and reality be chasing you, but you just run faster than them sometimes. As an act of good housekeeping and proper accounting for this portfolio, we want to be sure that the public

understands that the adjustment of $200,000 being removed from Home Affairs is being transferred to the Ministry of Public Safety, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, and that funding is in relation to the Religious Affairs portfolio.

When the Ministry of Home Affairs was restructured before my arrival, the Department of Religious Affairs moved to the Ministry of Public Safety, but unfortunately the funding for Religious Affairs did not move with it. In this supplementary, we are righting an administrative error. The other savings of $91,000 relate to personal emoluments. That does not mean that we are taking money away from civil servants.

It means that, in the first 90 days of this financial year, we were unable to fill the vacancies in the Ministry. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is not because the Ministry was not actively conducting the recruitment exercise. We want to make it abundantly clear that all the vacancies we had for the first quarter of this year were advertised. They have now closed.

The first round of interviews took place this week for Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles. Over the course of next week and the following week, the vacancies for Director of National ID, Assistant District Commissioner for South Caicos, Deputy Director of Citizenship and Senior Caseworker of Citizenship will be recruited. Mr. Speaker, we want to make it abundantly clear that each essential vacancy that will be recruited and filled within the next few weeks is part of the global operation and service plan of the Department of Citizenship, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the strengthening of the District Commissioner's Office in South Caicos. As these officers take up their roles, Mr. Speaker, this will provide a full complement for the Ministry and will show the hard work and dedication necessary to bring the Ministry to a standard to serve the public and ensure that we are accessible across these islands.

As it relates to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the supplementary numbers are small. $200,000 returns to the rightful Ministry in which the department is situated, and the savings for personal emoluments are for the first 90 days of this financial year for posts that will commence in the next few weeks. That is the fine print, Mr. Speaker, and we are pleased to present it to the House so that there is no mischief, no agenda and no hiding what this supplementary does and how it affects the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Moving quickly to the Ministry of Education, Sport, Youth and Culture, my remarks will be broken into two parts. The first part will concern the provisions made for the Ministry, and the second part will focus on the 50th anniversary of ministerial government and why the increase has been provided to the Department of Culture. Before we turn to celebration, Mr. Speaker, as we address the fine print, the staffing position within the Ministry of Education budgets for 574 positions. Currently in this financial year, 547 of these positions are filled.

This represents a fill rate of 95%. There is no defunding. There is no underfunding: 95%, with 27 vacancies. Year after year, we experience these challenges in education, and if you speak to our colleagues around the region who have to recruit, September is the beginning of the school year. Recruitment starts early, but persons may apply to multiple offers and then decide which one they want to accept. The 27 vacancies across the Ministry span teaching, support posts in our schools, specialist posts within the Department of Special Needs, and posts within the Youth Department and the Department of Culture. The Minister of Education, on her return, will assure this House that recruitment is actively in train in every case. We would have seen the recent postings for vacancies in the public service advertised.

There are currently recommendations headed to the Public Service Commission. Offers have already been extended, and the arrival of persons is due to commence nearer the beginning of the school year. Another fine detail I bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is Doris Robinson. The Ministry has sought to remove the principal post and establish a post for vice principal in its place.

This adjustment reflects the operational needs of the school and produces a reduction of $41,000 in salary provision for that programme. For those who are not aware, but I am sure we all are, Doris Robinson is that lovely school in Middle Caicos, but unfortunately the primary school-aged child population there is dwindling, so the school does not need to have the staffing levels that other primary schools would have.

Mr. Speaker, we move on to the increases being experienced in this supplementary: the allocation of $1 million to the Department of Culture. This allocation is made up of two sums: $500,000 transferred from the Ministry of Border Services and $500,000 drawn from the reduction in personal emoluments. The first allocation and the funding are required because they are needed and necessary to support the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government, for which the Department of Culture carries the principal coordinating responsibility. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that we on this side of the Chamber are not sure if this funding will be changed again.

We can confirm, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that the funding is where it rests, and the Department of Culture is the responsible coordinating department to assist in developing these celebrations in partnership. This is not just acknowledging 50 years; this is coming out beating our chest proudly and celebrating 50 years. This Administration has established several committees comprising representatives from ministries, departments, statutory bodies, community organizations and civic leaders. These committees are working diligently to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the historic occasion is celebrated in a manner befitting its importance, so that when we reach 75 years, we can look back on the 50th anniversary and be proud to see how much further, as a country, as a Parliament and, more importantly, as a people, we have gone during that time.

The official programme of activities, Mr. Speaker, will commence on August 30 and will conclude on October 26, 2026, with the National Honours and Awards Ceremony. We want the public to understand that this is not a one-day event. This is a series of events that will touch on our spiritual heritage, our food heritage, our cultural heritage, our parliamentary presence and our parliamentary development, as we ascend and show the people of these islands that it was

the right decision to return to representative government in 2012, and that it was the right decision for those founding fathers of representative politics to put their money and shoulders to the wheel and demand a constitution that would create this opportunity. Mr. Speaker, we are here to celebrate that history.

We are here to walk in that history as if it is alive today, and we are here to ensure that we never forget the sacrifices made by people who stood in this Chamber, including us who stand here today. Our past is not dead, Mr. Speaker. It is alive and well, and the forefathers are staring at us in this Chamber. The official commencement notices of the celebrations will be shared shortly.

The pre-anniversary events will take place across every single island.

PRAYER

PRAYER

Chaplain:

Luke chapter 12, verse 48: From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. What does that mean? To whom much is given, much will be required. Accountability: your responsibility matches the size of your blessings, your knowledge, or your power. Stewardship: people who receive more time, more money, more talent, or more power must use them well to help others and to honour God.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. This statement of Jesus has become somewhat a motto in Western culture and is found paraphrased in Uncle Ben's words of wisdom to Peter Parker in Spider-Man: with great power comes greater responsibility. The idea of to whom much is given, much will be required is that we are held responsible for what we have. If we are blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time or leadership, it is expected that we use these well to the glory of God, to the benefit of others, and for the betterment of country and people.

In context, Jesus had just told a parable about being ready for service. His disciple Peter asked if the parable was just for them or for everyone. Jesus replied with another parable in which he defined the faithful and wise manager. Let us pray. Father God, Chief Servant, who has called us and given us the great opportunity and responsibility to serve our people and this country, cause us not to take it for granted and always to put country above self. Bless us now as we convene to do the business of this Parliament. Grant to our Premier and this Government, to the Leader of the Opposition, to all members of this Honourable Parliament, and to all in positions of leadership, the guidance of Your Holy Spirit, to be mindful of their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all men and our beloved country. Bless our Speaker as he presides with holy wisdom, our Attorney General with physical and mental strength and clear legal guidance, and our Clerk and all Parliament staff with good stewardship and servanthood.

Bless this Parliament. Bless our beloved country. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Please be seated. Honourable Members, before we start, I apologise for the late start. We had a few technical issues that we had to resolve before starting Parliament today, so I apologise to the Members, to the gallery, and to those listening via Radio Turks and Caicos. I now call on the Honourable Premier.

MOTION TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDER 12

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Good morning to our support staff, those in the gallery, and others in the gallery. Good morning, Turks and Caicos Islands, and all those listening outside our islands, our diaspora, wherever you are. 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. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

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

REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS AND SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL PROCEDURE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I wish to arrange the order of the paper. Pursuant to Standing Order 49, I wish to rearrange the business of this Honourable Parliament so that Government business can have precedence over all other

business. Following on from that, I move that item No. 6, Papers, be taken as item No. 4; item No. 10, Reports from Committees, be taken as item No. 5; item No. 11, First Reading of Bills, be taken as item No. 6; item No. 17, Orders of the Day, be taken as item No. 7; and item No. 12, Statements by Ministers, be taken as item No. 9. I also move, pursuant to Standing Order 95, that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027, Bill No. 26, be allowed to go through all three readings within this meeting. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I second it. I saw on the revised estimate that I was not sure what that was about, but definitely, as is customary, money bills and supplementary bills go through all three readings. I second it.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much. Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027, Bill No. 26, go through all three readings during this meeting. 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. I beg leave to rearrange the order so that the Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027, Bill No. 26, be taken first, from second reading through to passage, and other bills follow.

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING THE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE CRESS EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF THE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Honourable Members, I again welcome you here to this Honourable Parliament. I also welcome the strangers in the gallery, persons listening via Radio Turks and Caicos, and persons watching and listening via our social media platforms. I send condolences to persons whom we have lost since we last met, and congratulations to persons who are celebrating happier times in their lives.

I also congratulate the Turks and Caicos team competing in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, and wish them all the best as they compete on behalf of their country. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are now at Messages from Her Excellency the Governor, and I have a message from Her Excellency the Governor which I will read in Parliament this morning. The message from the Governor is dated 29 July 2026 and is addressed to the Honourable Gordon J.

Burton, Speaker of the House of Parliament, House of Parliament, Turks and Caicos Islands. Dear Honourable Speaker Burton, I am writing regarding the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on its review of the CRESS Effectiveness Review of the Integrity Commission, which was tabled and presented in Parliament by the Select Committee Chair, Deputy Speaker Honourable Jameka L. Williams, last week. Having now reviewed both the Select Committee report and the presentation made in Parliament, I am concerned that they both contain a number of statements which are inaccurate or misleading, including significant unevidenced assertions concerning both historical and current involvement by Governors and the Governor's Office in the affairs and operation of the Integrity Commission.

If left unaddressed, it risks creating a misleading understanding of the position, constitutional roles and responsibilities. A number of the Select Committee report's conclusions and characterisations appear difficult to reconcile with the factual record. First, the Select Committee report appears to suggest that the Commission did not approve or accept the recommendations arising from the CRESS review process. In line with due process, the Commission considered and accepted the CRESS Effectiveness Review Report and its recommendations, a process on which the Honourable Attorney General advised and was directly cited.

The CRESS report was laid in the House and published jointly by the Governor and the Integrity Commission Chair following the process. Second, the Select Committee report appears not to reflect fully the extent of the engagement undertaken during the CRESS review. More than 40 stakeholders were interviewed during the independent review, in conjunction with public calls for evidence, inviting input from both the general public and a comprehensive range of public officeholders. This included Ministers, Members of Parliament, the Public Service Executive Board, Integrity Commission Commissioners, members of staff and members of the public.

While participation levels may have been lower than anticipated, efforts were made to engage a broad cross-section of persons, with the public consultation period extended in support of these efforts. Third, insufficient regard appears to have been given to the methodology set out in the CRESS report, which itself was subject to independent quality assurance. The CRESS report expressly distinguished between substantiated findings and isolated comments, making clear where views had not been corroborated by other evidence. Comments raised by one or two individuals and

unsupported by wider evidence were not treated as findings or conclusions.

It is therefore unclear how certain assertions in the Select Committee's report have been elevated to matters of fact. Of particular concern are several serious allegations related to the role of successive Governors and the Governor's Office. While there are legitimate circumstances in which the Governor may be required to engage on matters relating to good governance and the administration of justice, the Select Committee report includes suggestions of inappropriate intervention in the affairs of the Commission, assertions that investigations acted under the Governor's direction, and claims that the review was undertaken at the direction of the Governor with the objective of diluting or weakening legislative provisions. The Select Committee report also appears to cast doubt on the independence and propriety of Governor-appointed Commissioners. The Select Committee's report cites no evidential basis for any of these assertions.

In the case of the Integrity Commission Effectiveness Review, the public terms of reference were jointly developed and agreed with the Commission. Equally, Commissioners, irrespective of their appointing authority, are required to exercise independent judgment and discharge their statutory responsibilities in the public interest. Given the seriousness of the allegations in the Select Committee report and their reputational implications for current and former officeholders, as well as individual Commissioners, proper evidential scrutiny and due process would ordinarily require that such claims be substantiated before being relied upon in a parliamentary report and placed on the formal record of Parliament. I am also concerned that certain statements now placed on the parliamentary record may reasonably be understood as impugning the integrity or propriety of the Governor and former Governors.

Such implications are serious and, where unsupported by evidence, risk causing reputational damage while creating a misleading understanding of the constitutional role and conduct of those officeholders. This further underscores the importance of ensuring that the parliamentary record accurately reflects both the facts and the constitutional position. Parts of the Select Committee's report also appear to imply that the challenges relating to the effectiveness of the Integrity Commission are attributable to Governor involvement or interest in its affairs. That is a significant assertion for which, again, no evidential basis has been cited by the Select Committee.

It risks overlooking the broader institutional, legislative, resourcing and governance factors that inevitably influence the performance of any public body, as identified in the CRESS review. More fundamentally, it risks conflating the Governor's constitutional responsibility for good governance with responsibility for the day-to-day operation or effectiveness of an independent statutory institution. The two are distinct, and any suggestion otherwise risks creating a misleading impression of both the Governor's constitutional role and the Commission's independence. More broadly, the Select Committee's report appears to proceed on the premise that matters concerning the Integrity Commission are domestic in character and fall outside the legitimate purview of the Governor.

That position is difficult to reconcile with the Governor's constitutional responsibilities for good governance. The Integrity Commission is a key institution within the islands' good governance framework, and oversight of those constitutional responsibilities necessarily falls within the remit of the Governor. I am also concerned that some of the recommendations appear to blur the respective constitutional roles of Parliament and the Executive. Matters relating to machinery of government, policy development and legislative reform would ordinarily be developed by the Executive, considered by Cabinet, subjected to appropriate public consultation, and then brought before Parliament for scrutiny and debate.

The approach contemplated in the Select Committee report appears to move beyond parliamentary scrutiny into areas traditionally reserved to the Executive, raising wider constitutional questions that merit careful consideration. Prior to the Select Committee report being tabled in Parliament, I had not previously been provided with a copy of the report and was therefore unaware of the nature and extent of the assertions being advanced concerning the Office of Governor and wider constitutional matters.

A Salmon letter is typically issued during a public inquiry to individuals or organisations who may be subject to criticism in the report. I and other officeholders were neither informed of the potential allegations nor, from a procedural fairness perspective, provided an opportunity to verify the factual position being asserted within the Select Committee report and to provide relevant context before the Select Committee finalised and tabled its report in Parliament. This is procedurally irregular. There is common interest in ensuring that the parliamentary record accurately reflects both the facts and the constitutional position, and that matters are handled in a manner consistent with procedural propriety and principles of fairness.

This is particularly important where serious assertions are made concerning public officeholders, the execution of constitutional responsibilities, or the conduct of public institutions, and helps ensure that members are able to consider matters on the basis of a complete and accurate account. As I understand it, the matter is due to return to debate this week. Given the seriousness of the issues raised and the subsequent public commentary and media reporting which have repeated or amplified some of these unsubstantiated assertions, I would be grateful for your advice on the most appropriate means of ensuring that the parliamentary record is corrected and that any factual inaccuracies, misleading assertions, or unsubstantiated statements are appropriately addressed. I would also be grateful that any further parliamentary consideration proceeds on the basis of an accurate understanding of both the facts and the constitutional framework.

Finally, in line with good practice, I would be grateful if, going forward, I could be appropriately sighted on matters relating to my constitutional responsibilities and the Office of Governor before they are tabled in Parliament. This will help ensure that all relevant factual and constitutional contexts can be taken

into account and any supporting information may be provided where necessary. I am copying this correspondence to the Honourable Premier, in his capacity as Leader of Government Business, and the Honourable Attorney General, as the Governor's representative in Parliament and in her capacity as Legal Adviser. Yours sincerely, Delaney Daniel Selvaretnam, Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Premier.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable member, your microphone is off. Can you please turn it on for me?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Apologies. Is it still red? Grateful. Apologies, Mr. Speaker, for that. I must have tapped it with this little podium. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, we will engage residents across the country and continue to build on the excitement for this landmark anniversary. Importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education wants us to acknowledge that activities traditionally observed throughout the year, including Youth Week, Heritage Day and Emancipation Day, will incorporate special components highlighting the significance of the 50th anniversary and our constitutional development. Mr. Speaker, the Minister has stressed that I must outline some of the major activities for this funding, and so there will be an ecumenical service and cultural—

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

That will be the ecumenical service and cultural extravaganza. Then we will have Constitution Day and Flag Day. That is the holiday on Monday, August 31. The nation will observe Constitution Day and Flag Day, led by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Innovation. All the various departments and ministries will have an opportunity to pause and reflect on that document that gave us the ability to be in this Chamber today making positive, influential changes for the people of these islands. There will be a special constitutional talk show on the nation's number one station, Radio Turks and Caicos, featuring past and present parliamentarians, who will share their perspectives on the democratic journey. We will have a national flag motorcade and educational extravaganza. The Ministry is very excited about this initiative, and it will occur simultaneously across the islands.

They will then be followed by educational and cultural events highlighting our history, Mr. Speaker, our flag, education, constitutional development and, more importantly, island traditions, so we do not lose our connection to our past. Mr. Speaker, then we move into October, where we will honour our national honourees and recognize 50 outstanding individuals, and award their significant contribution to the growth and development of these islands. Mr. Speaker, we, the actual representatives of the people, on October 8 will have a special sitting of the Parliament. At this historic sitting, Mr. Speaker, we will invite all living former parliamentarians who remain with us on earth, because you cannot really invite those who went to Jesus, and current parliamentarians to participate. Mr. Speaker, we will have special guests.

I mean, we could invite the ones who went to Jesus, but that could be goosey. We will have special guests from across the region and internationally, along with members of our local community, and celebrate the significant milestone in our democratic history. I had the distinct honour and privilege of being the keynote speaker in BVI last year at their 75th anniversary of representative government and Parliament. This is nothing new, to celebrate these significant milestones, Mr. Speaker, and these milestones do not come cheap.

We have to touch every island. Every island has to have more than one event. We have to build up to the period, to the excitement, to the honour, to the glory of the work that those before us have done and those of us here today must continue to do. Mr. Speaker, just to wrap this portion up, there is a constitutional roadshow throughout the islands, publication of the commemorative anniversary booklet, the opening of the Parliament's library, and a series of educational engagements.

This is something that is near and dear to my heart. We want every single person to rep 649, Turks and Caicos, TCI, why I love TCI, your crest, your flag, everything. The ministry, through the committees, has worked and created a paraphernalia committee, and it has partnered with InvestTCI to do so through the MSME programme.

Again, synergy in government: one programme that benefits another, so our people get to tap into the funding for it. That is another layer of this Government's commitment to supporting local entrepreneurs, creatives and small businesses. Several of the vendors have participated, and I have seen orders already go through because they have been sending me their gear so that I can put my order through, because I plan to be 649 everything during that period.

We are talking about polo shirts, T-shirts, caps, hats, mugs, bags and souvenir pens, but most importantly, our beautiful flag, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are asking all our residents to take part in these activities coming up, but I must remind those potential vendors and anyone who is listening and thinking, let me get in on this because I have some cool TCI-designed products that could be celebrated during this period: licensed vendors, please ensure that you follow the rules of using our symbols.

That is our crest and that is our flag. We are asking you to be respectful. I saw a design the other day where the flag was in a place that I would not say was inappropriate, because no place on the body is inappropriate, but I felt it was a bit

distasteful where our flag was actually wrapped on the body. I can leave it just like that, Mr. Speaker.

I can take it to the next level, but if you think of some inappropriate places on the body and think where the crest may have been at that place, you will understand. We want to bring all these vendors together in a centralized location so that we can purchase these products.

These are our products, our people, our heritage, our future, our past and our present. Mr. Speaker, the public can expect, and you know the Minister of Education and you know the Minister of Public Safety, a robust communications campaign throughout August, utilizing radio, television, print, social media and other digital platforms. Mr. Speaker, I am wrapping up, but again my honourable sister minister said, Minister, make sure you get this part out, because the start of these celebrations is happening this Saturday here in Grand Turk, in the nation's capital. Please allow me, on behalf of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the amazing people of Leeward and Long Bay, and the Ministry of Education, to encourage everyone in Grand Turk to come out in large numbers this Saturday for Emancipation Day celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, you are invited to gather proudly as the people of these islands, beginning at 9.00 am, to commemorate the sacrifice, resilience and triumph of our ancestors, while embracing the spirit of national unity that defines the 50th anniversary celebrations. We encourage residents and visitors alike to participate in the evening festivities. We promise that it will be a vibrant display of culture, heritage, music and, more importantly, community spirit.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, on Monday's Emancipation Day holiday, we encourage the people of Middle and North Caicos to show up and show out as we continue the celebrations on those islands and promote the 50th anniversary of ministerial government. Mr. Speaker, for years we hear the retort. I think this is the first year that because a video of the police went out maybe a week or three days before a big event that happens in May for Haitian Flag Day. Whenever people from other countries who live and work in these islands celebrate their country, Turks and Caicos Islanders say, what about us? Why is their flag flying and ours is not flying? We are creating six full weeks. This can be long and this can be tiring, but this is six long weeks of activities celebrating everything Turks and Caicos. 649 for life, Mr. Speaker.

We must seize this opportunity as Turks and Caicos Islanders to celebrate our history, honour our forebears and inspire future generations. Mr. Speaker, every single Turks and Caicos Islander, please get your paraphernalia. Even if you just get the little flag pin and wear it every day during that period. If you get a little flag decal, stick it on the bumper sticker of your car.

If you buy one of the polo shirts or hats, build on the momentum of the 50th year anniversary. Next year, this day, or Heritage Day, or whatever day we stand up as Turks and Caicos Islanders and say, this is ours and we own it and we are proud to display it, you already have your gear. Let us not let these events go to vain and find a way to complain year after year. Mr. Speaker, I end as I began with the Ministry of Education.

The 50th anniversary of ministerial government is far more than a celebration of the past. It is an opportunity to reflect on where we have come from, to appreciate those who have contributed to our progress, and to recommit ourselves to building a stronger and more prosperous Turks and Caicos Islands for generations to come. Together, Mr. Speaker, we are barely a note in the amazing history of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and that has gone from strength to strength. Let us celebrate this nation with pride, with gratitude and with a shared vision for the future.

It is in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I bid you a pleasant afternoon. Thank you.

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR ON THE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE CRESS REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I think it is appropriate to acknowledge the communication from the Governor, and to say that there is a matter on the Order Paper for you to receive messages from the Governor, so it is appropriate that that has been delivered to the House.

Let me say, as it relates to the Integrity Commission and the Act that governs the integrity of public offices, including Members of Parliament, that the Act was introduced at a time of much controversy, and I think it has long been recognised that it is in need of amendment, both structural and otherwise.

Before we proceed with the business of today's sitting, I wish to make a brief statement regarding the report of the Select Committee on the CRESS Review of the Effectiveness of the Integrity Commission. In the interest of the efficient management of the House's time, and having regard to the fact that the matter is already reflected on the Government's legislative agenda, the Government has agreed, in pursuit of the parliamentary adoption of the Select Committee's report, which was laid at the last meeting and adopted in principle, to consider the recommendations to be of sufficient importance to warrant priority attention. It would be inappropriate to get into a debate or argument between the comments of the Governor and Parliament. I do believe that any issues that need to be taken into consideration going forward are matters that the Parliament could address. The amendment of the Integrity Commission Act has been on the Government's legislative agenda, and given the events, the report and the Governor's response to it,

I would like to make a commitment, as head of government, that this matter will now be given priority on the legislative

agenda in the interests of all those persons who are affected and all stakeholders. Accordingly, the Attorney General's Chambers will be asked and tasked with preparing the necessary legislative amendments and will also take responsibility for piloting the legislation through the established legislative process. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, as is customary, the proposed legislation will follow the normal constitutional and legislative channels. This will include appropriate consultation with key stakeholders, including the Governor's Office as a key stakeholder, before a Bill is brought to this Honourable House. Indeed, as President of the Cabinet, the Governor will have an opportunity to make a contribution as well.

The appropriate consultation will take place with stakeholders before a Bill is brought before this Honourable House for debate and consideration. It is now left to me, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Honourable Members of the Select Committee for the work undertaken by the Select Committee, and to assure the House that the Government is committed to ensuring that this important reform process proceeds in a timely and orderly manner.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Public Safety for his contribution.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say good evening to my colleagues here in the House. Good evening to those in the gallery. There are so many this evening, so I will not attempt to call them out. The whole squad, you are right. Mr. Speaker, I also want to say good evening to all the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands, whom I am proud to be representing, from Gipsy to West Caicos and in between.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to register my profound condolences to all the people across these Turks and Caicos Islands who are mourning tonight. Mr. Speaker, I want especially to single out the family of Miss Ivy Henfield, my good cousin, who will be buried this Saturday in Bottle Creek, North Caicos. I want also to acknowledge the family of the late Miss Gertrude Williams of Back Salina. I had the privilege; she is one of the last of her generation, and anybody who grew up in Back Salina will know of that good family.

I want to pass on condolences to her children. Then, Mr. Speaker, of course, when it comes to small businesses, if you grew up in Grand Turk, I want to acknowledge the family of Miss Mary. We call her Miss May. She has been in this community. She was from the town area, but her business was in Back Salina, and because she had her store many of us, and I see some Back Salinians in here, loved her. We recall and remember a very kind-hearted woman.

She would have given to you, and she helped many in this community. I want to acknowledge her family and pass on our condolences to her family. Mr. Speaker, this evening, like the Minister of Home Affairs, I am also acting as the Minister of Health and Human Services. As this supplementary bill speaks vastly to the area of health, I will spend my few minutes on that area, as the Minister of Home Affairs did an excellent job in articulating the movement of the 200,000 dollars from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of Public Safety, Gender and Religious Affairs and Social Welfare. Thank you, Honourable Minister. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution.

He said so much. I am never lost for words, but one of the areas he talked about that I would like to highlight for a second shows why he and his team will forever be on that side of the House for the foreseeable future. He talked about the purchasing of the Family Medical Centre. Mr. Speaker, as you know, and this country knows, I am the last former Minister of Health and Human Services, and the commencement of the purchasing of that building commenced under my tenure. Mr. Speaker, as the three former ministers who inherited the Ministry of Health from the Leader of the Opposition, this country knows that primary health care in this country, when he left, was a disaster. We promised this country that we would fix it, and we have begun the work.

One of the areas in improving the primary health care system in the best interest of the people of this country was to build two new facilities in Providenciales and one in Grand Turk. Those are in train. When the opportunity presented itself to purchase that clinic, as the prudent, smart government we are, we made the move. As we all know, the crowding at the hospital with the primary care area presented a huge problem in Providenciales.

I am proud tonight of this clinic, which will certainly move the needle in the communities there in Providenciales. I was told that the doors will open in the next two weeks or so, as the last few doctors have been recruited and will be on island shortly. It is going to be a good day for the people of Providenciales and, by extension, the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands. The purchase was the right thing to do. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to him, be careful.

As he spoke about the stimulus and taking care of the needs, he will benefit better by not reminding the people of this country why they put them into green pastures for the last two elections. Every time he speaks about it, it only invokes the people to keep them there for the next 20 years, because every time he speaks, the people lose confidence in him and his party that, if they should face an economic crisis in this country under them, sad will be their cry like it was the last time. He reminded us about how they gave the moneys to the work permit holders. Yes, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, it is a sore, sore spot for the people of this country.

With their mouths white in crisis, do not remind the people. That is crazy what you created. The stark difference to that scene was that one month after they sent us landslide, we

gave them their first stimulus. A first stimulus in a couple of days. You could not get it done in four years. The stark difference, Mr. Speaker, was the lines at the Treasury, tax island galore, as far as the eyes could see. That is the difference, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, and that is why they will continue to repose their confidence in this good Government. Now let me deliver for the Minister of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important matter, and I heard again the Leader of the Opposition jumping over what we were doing with solid waste management and the police vehicles. Mr. Speaker, sometimes he acts like he has never been in a Cabinet, like he does not understand. It has been very long, but the police vehicles are not off the table, neither is solid waste management, contrary to what he would have the public believe. That is far from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Now let me speak to the hearts and minds of the people of this country as to why they continue to support us. We are not perfect as a Government, but the great majority of the people of this country know that if they are in crisis, the heart of this Government is with the people. That is why we make moves that improve people's lives, and this is what this supplementary will do. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health and Human Services' request in relation to the supplementary bill this evening is for an additional 1 million dollars in relation to long-term care. As you are aware, while the NHIB is mandated to finance medically necessary acute and approved overseas treatment under the Treatment Abroad Programme, long-term care is not an insured benefit under the National Health Insurance Schedule of Benefits.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, services that have transitioned from acute medical management to long-term rehabilitation, custodial care, maintenance therapy, skilled nursing care and other long-term support services fall outside the NHIB statutory funding mandate. The purpose of this proposed supplementary request is to seek funding for cases which have now progressed to a stage where they are considered to fall within an administrative definition of long-term care. Mr. Speaker, he talked about going from four to some 17. You cannot predict people's health outcomes.

That is why you need a government that is prudent and efficient, that can move with the crisis and make adjustments. Given the complexities of many of these cases, while the NHIB remains committed to working with the Ministry to ensure continuity of care and to support the orderly transition of these patients, where appropriate long-term arrangements are established, the Ministry of Health and Human Services requires additional funding to ensure that we take care of these cases. Mr. Speaker, these are clients receiving care which is not otherwise available locally due to the complex nature of their illnesses. Whether they are adults or children, in some instances, Mr. Speaker, the care can be defined, or it could be indefinite until the client expires, Mr. Leader of the Opposition.

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

INTEGRITY COMMISSION REVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Do you have a point of order or a point of clarification?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

I just want, very briefly, to address this. I think it is fitting that a member from the Opposition, and also the Leader of the Opposition, address this very briefly. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that, in dealing with this, we have a meeting with the select committee, the Governor and the Integrity Commission all in one room, because I know that the information the committee presented did not come out of nowhere. It had to come from somewhere, and I have confidence that the members would not make anything up.

I suggest that, moving forward and dealing with this, as was stated in the letter, as to how we seek recommendations going forward, the committee, the Integrity Commission and the Governor's Office should get in one room and go through that report. Again, I thank the committee members for presenting it and highlighting some of the issues that we have to pay attention to. I am not saying whether they are true, but they highlighted issues of importance that are on our people's minds. If it is on our people's minds, it is their right to bring it to this Honourable House.

That is the recommendation I put forward as one of the ways of resolving this: that all three bodies get in one room and deal with the issues presented. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I want to thank the Honourable Premier and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I hear what the Leader of the Opposition said, but I do not think there is anything to be gained by looking in the rear-view mirror and having a banter about who is right and who is wrong, and who said this and who said that. I think we have adopted the report as it was laid on the table of the House. The need now is to focus on moving forward, and that includes creating separate or special provisions as to how parliamentarians are disciplined. In other Westminster-style

Commonwealth parliaments, integrity commissions exist and reports and returns are channelled through them, but, in terms of disciplining members of Parliament, that is done by Parliament.

As I said earlier, when this Act was brought into force, it was a different time. There was a lot of confusion, and we now need to grab the bull by the horns and fix it. It is not going to be fixed by us sitting in a room and having a fight about it. That can happen during a consultation period.

As a CPA, we will have an opportunity to sit in a room to properly inform the report or drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Chambers. The Integrity Commission itself will have an opportunity as a stakeholder, and so will the Governor's Office. I want to focus on us looking forward and correcting what needs to be corrected so that we have integrity legislation that is fit for purpose.

I think we can all agree, whether the CRESS report was right or wrong, whether it left out matters, or whether it was not as comprehensive as we would like it to be, that there is an issue with the effectiveness of the Integrity Commission. In the first place, the focus is on punishment and criminalizing persons, rather than on good governance. Again, that comes out of the period in which the Act came into place, and we now have to put that period of fear behind us. We can move on to a system where public servants and other people in public office can move forward with confidence that, if in the course of their work a genuine mistake is made, they will not be punished for it.

We have to move from a penalty approach to a performance approach. That is my view, and I would prefer if we just focus on moving forward.

PAPERS

REVISED FIRST SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ESTIMATE 2026/2027

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. I agree with you. I think we need to move forward with this matter. The report has had its say and the Governor has come forward with hers. It will now be advanced so that decisions can be made in the normal manner on how amendments are made to the legislation.

I want to move ahead on the Order Paper. We are now at Papers, and we will now have the Revised First Supplementary Appropriation Estimate 2026/2027 laid by the Honourable Premier. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

You may proceed. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to lay on the table of this Honourable Parliament, in accordance with Standing Order 32 and sections 115 and 116 of the Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution Order 2011, the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands Revised First Supplementary Estimate 2026/2027.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Madam Clerk.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I move that the revised supplementary estimate, and I want you to take note of the word revised because we did lay this on the table at the last sitting, be referred to the Appropriations Committee. There has been a revision to take account of the need to provide funding for long-term treatment for some of our citizens who require it, and it is not available through the National Insurance Board. We did not want to miss this important opportunity, because it is critical for some of them to have this. I request that this revised supplementary estimate be referred to the Appropriations Committee to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 115.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I move for the suspension of the business of the Parliament in order for the Appropriations Committee to meet and consider the Revised First Supplementary Appropriation Estimate 2026/2027.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, as the Chair is not here and I do not know if the two co-opted members are inside the building. The only member of the Appropriations Committee here is myself. One may be in the building, so I am concerned if we need to go to Appropriations right now.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

We have the co-opted members here.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Three members?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Okay.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Honourable Members, I am going to suspend this Honourable House, and I will refer the Revised First Supplementary Appropriation Estimate 2026/2027 to be dealt with by the Appropriations Committee in the normal manner. Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

This committee has convened in order to scrutinize the Revised Supplementary Appropriations 2026/2027, Bill 2026 Estimates. With me this morning, I will have the members introduce themselves. I am Randy Howell, representing the district of Blue Hills. To my left.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Good morning, Turks and Caicos Islands. Thank you for tuning in to this new session of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Edwin Astwood, Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Grand Turk South and Salt Cay. To you, Acting Chair, we know you will do a wonderful job in this session.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. To my right.

Christinae Lewis:

A pleasant good morning to all. My name is Christinae Lewis, and I am a co-opted member of the Appropriations Committee.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

This session is now in order. Before us this afternoon, we have the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Human Services, P.S. Desiree Lewis. Do you have a statement that you would like to open with?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the Appropriations Committee, persons listening in, Ministry of Finance colleagues and those in the gallery. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a statement, and I can proceed if you would like me to do so now.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Yes, ma'am, please carry on.

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Good morning again, everyone. As the Chair indicated, I am Desiree Lewis, the Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Health and Human Services. I appear before the Appropriations Committee today to provide a rationale in relation to the supplementary funding request in the amount of $1 million for long-term care, to support the ongoing management of clients requiring long-term care overseas whose care falls outside the scope of benefits provided under the National Health Insurance Plan benefits regulations and the NHI Act. The requested funding will provide financial support for the remainder of the 2026/2027 financial year to ensure continuity of care for affected patients receiving specialized services overseas, Mr. Chair.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING REQUEST FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

The NHIP benefits regulations provide an outline of the health services covered by the plan for beneficiaries. Under schedule two, there is a list of excluded benefits, which specifically includes long-term care. Currently, there are a number of clients who are being funded by the NHIP overseas for care

under the treatment abroad programme. These patients have now progressed beyond the acute phase of their illnesses and require ongoing long-term rehabilitation, specialised nursing care or maintenance care.

These services are no longer covered under the NHIP benefits regulations. Many of these patients continue to require highly specialised care that is not available within the TCI, either through the public hospitals, community health services, social services, or the aged care and rehabilitation unit. Mr Chair, in order to assist with these obligations, the Ministry of Health maintains a long-term care vote within the ministry, which has an annual allocation of $400,000. Presently, this vote is almost entirely consumed by one client who is receiving long-term care overseas without any prospect of returning to the TCI due to complex medical needs, as well as a few other clients who are receiving assistance for shorter periods.

Mr Chair, the remaining balance within the vote currently within the Ministry of Health is insufficient to support additional clients who now require assistance. Consequently, in short order, the ministry will exhaust its capacity to absorb these additional clients within the existing appropriations, hence the need for additional funding. Mr Chair, that ends my opening statement, and I await any questions from yourself or your committee members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY BILL

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Each case is different in nature, and each is being followed and monitored. However, in some circumstances continuous management cannot be provided locally because of the lack of expertise, whether in the hospital or in a community setting. Interrupting or discontinuing the treatment could result in deterioration of health and other complications. It could even result in permanent disability or loss of life. What we are doing here is critical. There are many families in this country tonight depending on the Government to do something, and we are doing something.

Each case will continue to be monitored with the objective of repatriating patients whenever clinically appropriate and where suitable local services become available. Parliament's approval of this request will provide a suitable interim funding mechanism while my Government progresses the development of a long-term national policy for financing and managing long-term care services in the country. That is an expensive venture, but a necessary one. When the Leader of the Opposition talks to the country about watching out because we are going to have debt, sometimes it is necessary to go into debt in order to take care of your people.

If we are to be real, this request also requires urgent consideration, as several of these beneficiaries are currently receiving specialised overseas care that cannot be provided within the Turks and Caicos Islands. Delays in approving the supplementary funding may result in interruption to essential medical treatment or the inability to secure placement at specialised rehabilitation facilities. That is why we are going to finish it tonight, so we can get access to that funding.

That is how critical it is. Approval of this requested supplementary funding will ensure that care and enable the Ministry to respond promptly to emerging long-term care obligations. Just today, as Acting Minister of Health and Premier, we received the next case. You do not know when these matters can arrive, and we will deal with that.

The Government is actively developing a suitable policy and funding framework in the Ministry for management of this service. I say tonight that we beg this Parliament. Yes, $1 million is just the beginning. Who knows? We may have to come back here next month for another $1 million or $2 million, but if that is what we have to do to take care of our people, we will do it.

With that, I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank this Honourable House for listening. I submit. Good evening, Turks and Caicos Islands. Thank you.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING REQUEST FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you, Madam PS. I am sure that the members of the Appropriations Committee do have questions. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Acting Chair, and good morning, PS, again. Madam PS, you said the current vote has $400,000. How many patients does that service?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you for the question, Honourable Member. Through the Acting Chair, it services about three clients at this stage, but one of the clients carries the bulk of the finances right now.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr Chair, if I may, are the additional funds for additional clients or to assist the other three clients?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

The additional funds will assist additional clients. Currently,

the NHIP is carrying about 14 additional clients who have to be transferred to the Ministry of Health and Human Services. The additional funds will assist the ministry for the remainder of the financial year to assist with some of those clients. At this stage, we cannot state which of those clients will transition home until we receive another report on them.

I cannot state right now if all 14 will be transferred to the ministry for the remainder of the financial year or whether some of those persons will drop off because they would be returning home. Once we receive those reports, we will be in a better position. For right now, it is about 14 additional clients.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Carry on, Honourable Leader.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Can you say what institutions and where they are for the 14 additional clients plus the four before? I am not asking for the names of the persons, but whether it is in Jamaica at University Hospital, at HOMS Hospital in the Dominican Republic, in Colombia, or elsewhere. Can you state the country, institution and the number of patients or clients at that institution?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY BILL

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your contribution. Honourable Members, we have passed the 6 pm hour. We will now take our— You want to finish? You have 10 minutes. The Chair recognises the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr Speaker, members of the House, strangers in the gallery, and my eminent Immigration and Border Services team that has been with us all day. They have to be fed, and they will be fed well. It is our hope that we will complete the next bill this evening so we can get to the people's work.

I wish all those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries a happy anniversary and a happy birthday. I also join in all of the condolences, including to the families of Ma May, Miss May, and the Misick and Forbes families. I would have known them all my life living on Good Street. Essentially, at the end of the street was where their shop was, and I would have frequented that just about every other day.

I offer my condolences. Although the Leader of the Opposition has conveniently left the Chamber at this time, there are a couple of things I wanted to clear up for the public before I touch on a few issues in relation to my support for this supplementary bill. The first thing I would like to clear up is the idea that the Leader of the Opposition spoke as if the COVID years, when we took over in February 2021 under the leadership of the Premier, were back to normal.

That is far from it. The fact is that in January they had finally negotiated getting a Pfizer vaccine from the United Kingdom, and they were out of office about a month or so later. I do not know how it could have been over when a vaccine programme was just being rolled out. The second thing that the Leader of the Opposition unfortunately mentioned, and hopefully the Member for The Bight can take this message, was that although he said he was in front of the camera all those times and in meetings until midnight, once COVID really hit they called emergency powers and gave all their authority to the Governor. We have not forgotten. That is part of the reason, in addition to the stimulus work, that the people got rid of them.

As Members will remember, the then Governor was in videos when the curfew was put in place, standing there with the policemen and telling people to go home. Those are public records that I am sure are still on Facebook. I do not know what he is talking about. The vaccine mandates were ours.

When we took office, one of the very first things the Cabinet, under the leadership of the now Minister of Innovation, put in place was the mandate for work permit holders to be vaccinated, to protect our people. Later, when I took on the role as Minister of Health—before I get to my short tenure as Minister of Health for a year, I also have to say that during the tenure of the former Minister, whom I succeeded, this Government brought COVID cases down to zero.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING REQUEST FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Through the Acting Chair, to ensure that I have received the Honourable Member's question correctly, is it the clients that are currently with the Ministry of Health that you are inquiring about, or those who will be transferred from the NHIP? All right, sir; thank you for that clarity. Currently we have a few patients in Jamaica at an institution called Revamp, where we send quite a few persons who need those services. We also have persons in Colombia at Hospital Internacional, and we also have clients in the Dominican Republic at HOMS and at Health City in Cayman. If you would like a breakdown, I can adjust my report to include the breakdown of the countries and the names of the health facilities to make it easier for you, sir.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, ma'am, but at this time do you have the numbers? How many are at Revamp? How many are at Hospital Internacional? How many are at HOMS?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Currently we have two patients at Revamp and one at another facility in Jamaica. Apologies, that one is now discharged. We have four clients at Hospital Internacional in Colombia. We have three clients in Health City in Cayman. We have one client in the United States as well. We also have a client at Plaza de Salud in the Dominican Republic and one client at HOMS in the Dominican Republic. An additional client in Colombia is at another site called Occidente.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

If you do not have it—

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Go ahead, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Given that the $400,000 is just about gone, are you satisfied that $1 million will carry these 18 persons, the 14 plus the four, for the remainder of the year?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Based on what the NHIP is currently paying for some of the clients, the Ministry of Health is confident that the additional $1 million will assist.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

The only time that happened during the COVID-19 response under this Government was when cases reached zero. That is a fact. We did that. Then cases started to rise again, as happens from time to time when people start relaxing, and one of the next moves we made was to introduce the mandate requiring all visitors to be vaccinated.

I remember, as a fresh-faced Minister, when Cabinet made that decision, we were criticised because the economy was just starting to rev up again. People were coming, and we were still feeling the effects of those who got passports for the first time, came to the Turks and Caicos Islands and are still coming all these years later. We were criticised and told that we were trying to shut down our economy. I distinctly remember the Chamber of Commerce warning that we could lose $200 million.

Their maths was funny, just like the Leader of the Opposition's maths. But over that same calendar year, or fiscal year, until recently when the Minister of Tourism announced that the first half of this year was record-breaking, that was the record, even during COVID. We had record numbers of tourism arrivals during that time, and that had nothing to do with the Opposition. I therefore do not understand this business about the COVID years and missing the war.

One more thing about the COVID years: we had to deal with the deadliest part of the virus, the Delta variant. I was in charge of Health then. Then came Omicron, which was not as severe but could spread quickly. Our numbers began to spike, and the Opposition pointed to that, even though scientists knew that it was a less severe variant as it moved through its cycle.

We explained to the public what was taking place and accepted that the numbers were spiking, but that it was anticipated. Mr. Speaker, I also want to address vacancies. I do not understand why the Leader of the Opposition is behaving as if he has never been in Government before. Vacancies are part of growth, because we are not removing these posts; some simply have not yet been filled. He would have known that, in the Border Force under the Ministry of Immigration and Border Services, we have just onboarded 15 new Border Force officers. The Deputy Governor's Office has posts out, and there have been three additional promotions for senior border services.

This information was shared with him in the Appropriations Committee on Friday and today, so he should have known the answer before speaking about vacancies. Current vacancies for the Department stand at 10. That comprises three senior Border Force officers and one Border Force officer before the Public Service Commission, meaning that interviews have already taken place and recommendations have been made; three assistant directors who are in receipt of offers; one director to be interviewed next week, with interviews in progress; one business analyst to be readvertised; and one assistant Border Force officer to be reprofiled. In the wider Ministry, the protocol assistant is before the Public Service Commission; customer service offer letters have already been sent to three persons; and the Labour Tribunal has one person being onboarded, with an additional five persons to come through this supplementary once it is passed. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about defunding immigration, education, repatriation, police and everything under the sun.

For proper context, we are simply moving about $200,000 from the repatriation and detention vote, which is presently $5.5 million, to be reduced to $5.3 million, a little over 3%, to ensure that we get the staff needed in the Employment Services Department. The Leader of the Opposition also

knows that, when it comes to repatriation, we use our best estimate based on the previous year's profile.

If we need to move money around appropriately, we come here, and we can get new money if needed if there is a significant uptick. We are watching what is taking place in the world and are mindful of what may happen. Supplementaries come as needed. I do not understand why, in this instance, he is making a big deal and trying to suggest to the country that we are somehow defunding immigration when we are moving money from one part of immigration to another.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, on work permits, I do not understand the Leader of the Opposition. With the type of economic boom we are experiencing, work permits come along with that, because we will need more people to do some of the jobs. Our job in the Ministry, particularly in the Employment Services Department, is to ensure that Turks and Caicos Islanders get a fair shot at the middle, senior and upper-level jobs available in our economy. That is why getting the additional five staff members to vet those matters and ensure that opportunities are made available to our people is so important.

Yet this is the same Leader of the Opposition who is saying that we should not get the additional money to hire those persons. You cannot have it both ways. We have a plan, we are moving forward, and we are doing well. With that, Mr. Speaker, I support this supplementary and look forward to passing it very swiftly after supper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING REQUEST FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

So we will not be back for the two patients?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

I cannot say. Healthcare is very fluid, sir, and anything can happen to one of these patients. They can either progress or regress. If they regress, we might be looking at additional funding, but we pray that none of them regress and that all of them continue to progress.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr Chair. One final question from me. What is the average cost for each of these persons, and what are the highest and lowest amounts per month, if you have that information? If not, you can provide it later in the report for us.

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you, Honourable Member. From the Ministry of Health perspective, I can say that, for those clients we have been covering, we see an average of $24,000 per month. For a breakdown on those from the NHIP, I would have to request that information, sir. From the Ministry of Health perspective, we have seen one client exhaust about $24,000 per month, and that is ongoing.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam PS. Thank you very much, Mr Chair, for allowing me those questions.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

You are quite welcome, sir. Madam PS, I notice that, in order to fund the amount you are looking for, works to dump sites seem to be losing funding. Will that be deferred, reappropriated, or will it be back in the future?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you for the question, Hon. Chair. Based on my knowledge, I believe that we will receive the funds, but I cannot anticipate an appropriation at this stage. Perhaps the question should be posed as a parliamentary question to the policymakers, sir.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

A supplementary to that question: it says dump sites. Is that one island or across the country, two islands?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

If it is recurrent, it is throughout all of the Turks and Caicos Islands. If it is capital, it is Grand Turk and Providenciales.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Miss Lewis.

Christanae Lewis:

Through the Acting Chair, good morning, Madam PS. Thank you for your presentation. You mentioned that there are currently three patients covered under long-term care. Can you tell us approximately how long they have been covered under long-term care?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you for the question through the Acting Chair. To the member, some of those patients have been covered for approximately 1,099 days, and that figure speaks to the longest client that we have overseas receiving long-term care. That is over a three-year period that the individual would have been in a rehabilitation centre.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Go ahead, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam PS, I know you do not have your medical team here with you, but to the best of your ability, what is it about long-term care that we cannot provide here if we set it up? What does long-term care entail? Continuous oxygen, continuous monitoring? What does it entail, to the best of your ability, without having your medical team here?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you to the Honourable Member. Through the Chair, because each patient has his or her own special challenges, a number of different disciplines would be required. Whilst we have one patient receiving long-term care who has a congenital heart defect, that patient also requires additional medical support along with physiotherapy and some occupational therapy. All of them have multiple reasons why they cannot be treated at home.

In terms of the second part of your question regarding having them treated here, I believe that question is best suited to the policymakers through a parliamentary question.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have those questions coming up shortly, so I definitely will put that to them very shortly.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Does that mean, then, that all of the patients who will benefit from this will be confined to a medical facility?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

The aim is to assist these patients from the additional funding that we are requesting at this stage.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam PS, this may be moving into a different ministry, but is there any funding available for family members to visit them? Our patients are lying in health facilities year after year. Is there any fund, as there is for the prison, when we have a prisoner overseas and there is a fund for the family to go and visit that prisoner? Is there a fund for family members to go and visit patients?

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Through the Acting Chair, to the Honourable Member's question, not to my knowledge. Based on the current policy that we have in place for treatment abroad, once we send a patient overseas, the patient does have an option to have an accompanying member go with them for their treatment. The NHIP would cover that cost. If that person returns home, normally what we would see is families visiting their relatives, swapping out and covering their own costs.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Sorry, through the Chair. I was shouting out and should not have been doing that. I was saying that, since there is a programme for prisoners, perhaps we can look at a programme for the sick and shut-in. I know you are going to say that is for the policymakers.

I just want to put it out there, and we will put that to them.

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you, Honourable Member. You are correct.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Madam PS, I think we have exhausted our questioning. Thank you very much. We did not request that you forward a copy of your statement to the House for us. Please do so, and have a pleasant rest of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Technology and Energy.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought we were going to take a break for supper, but I understand we will go through and take supper a little later. Honourable Premier, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, elected members, Chaplain, strangers in the gallery, the Deputy Governor, officials from Border Control, persons watching on streaming media and television, those listening by radio and my fellow Turks and Caicos Islanders, it is a privilege to rise today in support of the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026. As the Premier and Minister of Finance has outlined, this supplementary bill includes funding to shield eligible residential customers from sharp month-to-month increases in electricity costs caused by rising global fuel prices.

Under this initiative, the Government will subsidize the portion of the fuel factor, also described as the power adjustment cost on Grand Turk and Salt Cay bills, that exceeds 22 cents per kilowatt-hour for residential customers whose average monthly electricity bill was below $1,500 during the period from December 2025 to June 2026. This assistance will apply to electricity bills for the period July to October 2026. Mr. Speaker, this intervention is necessary because this is a difficult period for many households across the Turks and Caicos Islands. As I stated in my public update on 16 July, our people are experiencing one of the hottest summers on record, perhaps the hottest.

At the same time, children are home from school, air conditioning units are operating for longer periods, refrigerator doors are opened more frequently, and families are already managing the increasing cost of food, housing, transportation and other essential expenses. The last thing our hardworking citizens need is an electricity bill that rises unpredictably from month to month. Our Government understands that concern. We hear our people and understand the pressures they are facing.

This challenge is being felt across our entire community. Many residents have spoken publicly through social media, while others have contacted their elected representatives directly with concerns, suggestions and constructive feedback. I thank them for doing so and encourage them to continue. Responsive government begins with listening to the public. The views of our citizens help to shape the decisions of this Government and the collective response of Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, the present increase in electricity costs is being driven primarily by geopolitical events beyond the borders of the Turks and Caicos Islands. These events have increased global fuel prices and, because our electricity system remains heavily dependent on imported fuel, the effect is being transmitted directly to electricity bills at home.

To understand why this intervention is required, it is useful to explain how electricity charges are calculated in the Turks and Caicos Islands. FortisTCI electricity bills are made up of two principal components: first, the electric base rate; and secondly, the fuel factor, which is described as the power cost adjustment on bills issued in Grand Turk and Salt Cay. The electric base rate is a regulated rate currently fixed at 27 cents per kilowatt-hour. It is intended to cover electricity operating costs, including fuel priced at the benchmark landed cost of around 90 cents per gallon.

That rate cannot change unilaterally. FortisTCI cannot change that rate whenever it wants; it must submit a request to the Government through the proper regulatory process. That rate is therefore consistent. The fuel factor, by contrast, is variable. It goes up and down and reflects changes in the landed cost of fuel above or below the benchmark price of 90 cents per gallon on Providenciales. Grand Turk is around 80 cents and South Caicos is probably a little higher, but the average is around 90 cents. In the base rate, customers are already paying for 90 cents per gallon of fuel landed in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

When the landed price of fuel falls below the benchmark, the difference is credited to customers. Some may believe they have never seen that, but I think I saw it once where the fuel factor was a credit. When the landed price rises above the benchmark of 90 cents, the additional cost is passed through to customers. Together, the electric base rate and the fuel factor form the effective rate paid by consumers.

That is why, when we see it, we are paying more than 40 cents per kilowatt-hour for electricity. The numbers demonstrate the scale of the present challenge. During 2025, when the world was relatively stable, the electric base rate remained fixed at 27 cents per kilowatt-hour, as expected, and the fuel factor ranged from a low of 14 cents to a high of 17 cents per kilowatt-hour.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY OF THE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Ministry of Health and Human Services PS:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

This Committee is suspended for five minutes while we await

the representative of the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. The Committee is back in session. Before I go further, let us introduce ourselves. I am Randy Howell, Member of Parliament for Electoral District 8, Blue Hills. To my left.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

And it averaged 16 cents. Mr. Speaker, you are an accountant; you know that is not a large range. Fourteen to 17 cents is a very tight range, and I would say very predictable. The average combined effective rate for 2025 was therefore approximately 43 cents per kilowatt-hour. So far in 2026, the electricity rate has remained unchanged at 27 cents.

However, the fuel factor has ranged from approximately 15 cents on the low side to as high as 31 cents, producing an average fuel factor of approximately 22 cents for the first seven months of the year. The average combined effective rate for 2026 has therefore risen to approximately 49 cents per kilowatt-hour. That is significant. For households already managing tight budgets, it is not an abstract economic statistic. It affects whether a family can comfortably afford groceries, meet a mortgage or rent payment, pay school-related expenses, or set aside funds for an emergency. This is why our Government is acting.

I will stop there and say this: the Leader of the Opposition knows that he does not have a problem with all residential customers receiving it. He was making a case because he said our party used it against them and they lost. If they were not smart enough to address it, that is on them. He knows he does not have a problem with that.

Let me explain why it happened. FortisTCI's bills do not distinguish between Islanders and foreigners; they distinguish between business and residential customers. We could not provide relief quickly by going through one bill at a time to see who was from the Turks and Caicos Islands and who was not. Cabinet made the decision collectively, and I take responsibility for it. We decided to provide it for everybody so everyone could get it as quickly as possible.

He knows and understands this. Come to class and I will give you class 101 on electricity bills. For the period July to October 2026, eligible residential customers whose average monthly electricity bill was below $1,500 between December 2025 and June 2026 will not pay a fuel factor above 22 cents per kilowatt-hour, and the Government will meet the cost above that threshold. We will subsidize it and manage it.

It covers four months and, if we need to act again, we will act again. This measure is targeted, temporary and responsible. It is targeted because it is focused on residential consumers most likely to feel the impact of rising electricity costs, particularly since they cannot pass it on like hotels to their guests. It is temporary because it responds to an immediate period of exceptional fuel price volatility, and we have to act now; not by going through one by one and having people bring their passport, fill out a portal, provide their status card and passport, and show those documents.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY OF THE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Good afternoon. My name is Edwin Astwood, Leader of the Opposition, Member of Parliament for Grand Turk South and Salt Cay.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

To my right.

Christanae Lewis:

Good afternoon. My name is Christanae Lewis, and I am a co-opted member of the Appropriations Committee.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Sitting before us this afternoon is a representative of the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. Sir, can you introduce yourself, please?

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. My name is Rex Swann, and I am the Human Resources Manager for the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. I wish first to apologise for the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Rodney Adams, who could not be here this afternoon. I hope I will be able to answer your questions.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you. We do have some questions for you, sir. We will lead with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, and thank you for appearing before us on such short notice. To the best of your ability, this deduction in moneys was supposed to go towards the fleet. What does that represent? How many vehicles does it represent, and for which island or islands?

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

I will start with the latter first. Those vehicles would represent vehicles for all the islands of the Turks and Caicos Islands: Grand Turk, South Caicos, Providenciales, North Caicos and Middle Caicos. I cannot give actual specifics in terms of how many vehicles, but we can provide that in a subsequent brief.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

My question, Mr. Swann, is this: I know you cannot give specifics as to how many vehicles, but how does that affect your current fleet?

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

Obviously, it would have some impact on our current fleet, but it should not be much of an issue or challenge as long as the money comes back to us.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Is all the current fleet from last year in operation? Have any of the vehicles been deemed out of commission this past year?

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

All of the fleet is not in operation. Over time, with policing work, the fleet gets damaged. We are trying to make do, but we need the money to replace our ageing fleet and the vehicles that have been damaged.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

You do have vehicles on each island that allow you to attend incidents and so forth?

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

Yes, we do. We have fleet on each island, but we would still want more than we have now.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Mr. Swann, we want to thank you for appearing before us this afternoon. I know you rushed to get here. Thank you very much for that, and we wish you a pleasant afternoon. We have no more questions, sir.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Members, please.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

That is what you are suggesting we have to do for electricity. It is temporary, as I said, because it responds to an immediate period of exceptional fuel price volatility. It is responsible because it provides relief without pretending that short-term subsidies alone can solve the deeper structural challenges within our energy system. Our Government will continue to monitor electricity costs closely, and we will take further action where necessary and financially sustainable.

However, we must also look beyond the pressures of today. We cannot subsidize our way to energy security. A stronger and more resilient economy requires us to reduce our exposure to imported diesel fuel. It also requires us to diversify our sources of electricity generation, modernize the regulatory framework and accelerate investment in renewable energy. For that reason, this supplementary budget includes approximately $1.5 million to establish the licensing framework for renewable energy systems, including the introduction and passage of the Renewable Energy and Resource Planning Bill, the RERP.

You will hear me talking more about that as we go along, because we are planning on bringing it to Parliament in short order. This legislation will mark a significant step towards a more sustainable and secure energy future for our beautiful by nature Turks and Caicos Islands. I hope the public is listening, because this seems to generate a lot of conversation in chats. This Bill will establish a clear and modern regulatory framework for renewable energy development and long-term resource planning.

It will support the gradual reduction of our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including sulfur diesel. It will encourage investment in cleaner and more resilient electricity generation. This Government is taking the lead on that. We are not copying and pasting from other countries across the Caribbean; we are leading.

It will protect the integrity and safety of our electricity grid,

which is one of the better ones in the region. Even though it is expensive, we do not have problems with power reliability. When we move from fossil fuel to renewable energy, we will protect the grid so that we do not experience downtime.

It will help to create a system that is more affordable, transparent, equitable and predictable for residents and businesses alike. Through the Renewable Energy and Resource Planning Bill, the Government intends to encourage the development, generation and use of renewable energy; promote reliable and affordable electricity for households and businesses; maintain the integrity, stability and safety of the national electricity grid; strengthen fairness, transparency and predictability within the electricity sector; and ensure that the benefits of renewable energy are shared broadly and fairly across the entire Turks and Caicos Islands. Not just Providenciales, but North Caicos, Middle Caicos, Salt Cay, South Caicos, Parrot Cay, Pine Cay, Grand Turk and the entire Turks and Caicos Islands. Energy policies must operate across more than one time frame.

We must provide immediate relief to families facing higher bills today. We must strengthen the regulatory and investment framework over the medium term. We must build an energy system for the long term that is more secure, more sustainable and less exposed to global shocks. That is what this good Government is doing.

The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands did not create the geopolitical instability that is driving up fuel prices. We cannot control what happens in distant capitals or international energy markets, but we can control how quickly we respond. We can control whether we use this moment merely to manage a crisis or to build a stronger system for the future. We are building a stronger system for the future.

Our responsibility is not simply to react to the pressures of today; it is to ensure that our country is better prepared for the challenges of tomorrow. As we are reminded in Proverbs 21:5, the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance. This Bill reflects that principle. It provides practical relief now while investing in the reforms necessary to create a more resilient, affordable and sustainable energy future.

We are doing this for all of us, including our children, grandchildren and future generations. We are building a sustainable energy future. The goal is to drive the fuel factor cost down as close as possible to zero so that we do not have these price fluctuations and volatility. For those reasons, I am pleased to support the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026. May God continue to bless you and your family, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and these beautiful by nature islands of ours that we call home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY OF THE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026

Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force HR:

Thank you so much. Have a good day.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

I want to say thank you to the Clerk and Madam Clerk of Parliament, and thank you to Mrs. Josephine Abizzi, the Acting Deputy Budget Director, who represented the Ministry of Finance. This session of the Appropriations Committee scrutinising the revised Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 is now adjourned sine die.

REPORT OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE FIRST SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ESTIMATE 2026/2027 AND THE REVISED FIRST SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ESTIMATE 2026/2027

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes its sitting. Please be seated. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. The Appropriations Committee has met to review the revised First Supplementary Appropriation Estimate. We are now on Reports from Committees, and we will have the report from the Appropriations Committee on the First Revised Supplementary Estimates 2026/2027 to be laid by the Acting Chair. Acting Chair.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to my colleagues here in this Honourable House. Good afternoon to visitors and friends in the gallery, and good afternoon to the listening public from Turks and Caicos. A special good afternoon to the wonderful people of Blue Hills. Mr. Speaker, I beg leave, in accordance with Standing Order 128, to have the report of the Appropriations Committee on the First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027 and the Revised First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027 laid on the table and printed without question put. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Acting Chair of the Appropriations Committee and seconded by the Honourable Member for Leeward and Long Bay and Minister of Home Affairs, that the First Revised Supplementary

Appropriation Estimates 2026/2027 be laid on the table of this Honourable House without question put. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable Chair.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Appropriations Committee met on Friday, 24 July 2026, and today, Thursday, 30 July 2026, to examine the First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027 and the Revised First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027. Mr. Speaker, the Committee heard from 10 ministries, departments, and one statutory body, and after hearing from the various accounting officers and scrutinising the estimates in detail, the Committee came up with the following findings and recommendations. Having reviewed the submissions and evidence presented, the Appropriations Committee makes the following recommendations: expedite recruitment across all ministries to address critical staffing shortages; review and enhance housing and professional allowances to improve the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel; prioritise staffing within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney General's Chambers to support the effective administration of justice; accelerate the implementation and delivery of capital expenditure programmes or community enhancement projects during the second quarter of the fiscal year; publish comprehensive expenditure reports on the Cost of Living Relief Programme and the 50th anniversary celebrations to promote transparency and accountability; incorporate knowledge transfer requirements into all energy sector consultancy contracts to strengthen local institutional capacity; and enhance oversight and quality assurance in the budget preparation process to prevent future omissions and improve the accuracy of budget estimates.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee recommends that a further issue of funds be authorised from the Consolidated Fund of a sum not exceeding $12,502,187.23 to be applied to the service of the financial year ending 31 March 2027. The Committee recommends that a reduction of funds be authorised from the Development Fund in the sum not exceeding $1,510,000 to be applied to the service of the financial year ending 31 March 2027. Mr. Speaker, the Committee acknowledges with deep gratitude all persons and offices appearing before the Committee and those involved in the arrangements for the meetings.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 128 of the Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution Order 2011, I move that the report of the Appropriations Committee on the First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027 and the Revised First Supplementary Appropriations Estimate 2026/2027 be adopted. Do I have a seconder?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, I call on the Honourable Premier to wrap up the debate and to commit the Bill to the Committee of Supply.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - FIRST READING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Chair of the Appropriations Committee and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, that the report of the Appropriations Committee on the First Revised Supplementary Estimates 2026/2027 be laid on the table of this Honourable House and adopted. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Thank you very much, Honourable Chair, for your report on the Appropriations Committee. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper, and we are now at the First Reading of Bills. We will have the First Reading of the Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier and Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade. Honourable Premier.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues on this side have dealt ably with the comments by the Leader of the Opposition, and I do not intend to make any further comment. In wrapping up, it is safe now to say that I would like to move that the Bill be committed to the whole House.

Committee of Supply. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 93, I move that the Supplementary Appropriations 2026/2027, Bill 2026, be referred to a Committee of the Whole. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Technology and Energy that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriations 2026/2027, Bill 2026, now be referred to the Committee of Supply. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable Members, we will now take our evening break, and on return I will ask the Honourable Deputy Speaker to chair the Committee of Supply. This Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - FIRST READING

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to Standing Order 90.4, the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 Bill 2026 be read a first time. Do I have a seconder?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

Clerk:

Office of the Governor, $8,215,694.49.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - FIRST READING

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 Bill 2026 be now read a first time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $8,215,694.49 stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - FIRST READING

Clerk:

This Ordinance may be cited as the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Act 2026 and comes into operation on the day of publication in the Gazette.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety that the amount of $8,215,694.49 stand as part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $8,215,694.49 stand as part of the schedule. All in favour, aye.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - SECOND READING

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, the Second Reading of Bills. We will have the Second Reading of the Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 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 92.2, I move that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 Bill 2026 be read a second time. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Second. Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Public Safety, that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2026/2027 Bill 2026 be now read a second time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 03, Police, $45,528,667.10.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION 2026/2027 BILL 2026 - SECOND READING

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this Supplementary Appropriations Bill 2026-2027, and I am going to do something unusual. I am going to ask those persons listening to share whatever link they may be on, because I want to be sure that everything I say is properly and fairly interpreted by the public.

Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks, some have attempted to diminish the unprecedented contribution that this Government has made and continues to make to the growth and development of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I am therefore obliged to place this presentation of the First Supplementary Appropriation in context, to set the record straight.

Mr. Speaker, when my administration assumed office in February 2021, we inherited circumstances not of our own making. The global pandemic had shaken the very foundation of our tourism-dependent economy. Borders had closed, aircraft sat idle, and hotels that only months before had welcomed thousands of visitors each week had fallen silent. Government revenues had contracted dramatically, businesses struggled to survive, and many families faced profound uncertainty about their livelihoods and their future.

Mr. Speaker, while others spoke of survival, we spoke of recovery. While others urged caution, we prepared for opportunity. While others questioned whether these islands could regain their momentum, we never lost faith in the resilience of our people. Working together with our public servants, our private sector, our healthcare professionals and the people of these islands, we reopened our economy safely, restored international confidence, and positioned the Turks and Caicos Islands once again among the world's premier tourism destinations.

Visitor arrivals rebounded, investor confidence returned, employment recovered, Government revenues strengthened, and our public finances moved from uncertainty to stability. Mr. Speaker, fiscal responsibility was never pursued for its own sake. It was pursued because disciplined public finances create the space to invest in people. And, Mr. Speaker, invest we did.

We strengthened our schools, expanded scholarships, improved conditions for teachers, and continued investment in healthcare. We enhanced transparency, reinforced the independence of oversight institutions and advanced digital government services. But perhaps most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we began reshaping the philosophy of government itself. For many years, economic policy throughout the Caribbean has been measured almost exclusively by investment figures, GDP growth and tourism arrivals.

Those indicators matter, but they are not enough. A nation may enjoy impressive economic statistics while too many of its own citizens remain spectators rather than participants.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026/2027, BILL 2026

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the amount of $45,528,667.10 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Member for Cheshire Hall that the amount of $45,528,667.10 stand as part of the schedule. 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. Madam Chair, this was one of my concerns, because line item 03-176-34404, software, shows an increase of $132, and the explanatory note says the software was previously covered by the FCDO and was omitted during the budget preparation process due to timing differences. Help me understand what is going on here. The FCDO funded this before, and now they are saying TCIG

has to fund it.

Is this the proper way to do it?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. OTRIX was previously funded by the FCDO and is now being taken on by the TCIG.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

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

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Last year, when we entered into the contract, did we do so knowing that it would be for only one year, two years, or a specified period of time? I was wondering why we did not deal with this during the budget debate, if we went into it knowing that it was only for one year or two years.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. Madam Chair, I do not know the specific details of when it was notified that the TCIG would have to take it on, but I believe that this is the position common across the overseas territories. OTRIX, for the members of the public, is an intelligence system to which police forces across the region have access, not just amongst the overseas territories. It has been in place for quite a long time.

It is a secure intelligence database system. Obviously, there was a policy decision taken at some point that the FCDO would no longer fund it, but I do not know the details of when that occurred.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any—do you have a follow-up? Go ahead with your question.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much. Perhaps you can say what happened to the revenue that was generated. I do not see the line item for the police records. Did that revenue come to TCIG? If it is the UK system, did the revenue go to the Treasury, or was it maintained in the Police Department?

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

Madam Chair, thank you very much for the question. I think we are now mixing up two things because I believe the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has now switched to a question about police records. OTRIX is not revenue-generating; it is an intelligence database. As it relates to police records, that is TCIG revenue, and that revenue was previously coming to the Government until the contractor stopped remitting.

That is being pursued in terms of a contractual dispute, but this amount in the budget is for the acquisition of a similar system that does the same thing as the one that is there at the moment. I do not know if the Minister for Innovation has anything more to add. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION NO. 1 BILL 2026

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, that is not inclusive development. It is growth without ownership. It is prosperity without empowerment. The Government rejected that model entirely. We resolved to build an economy in which Turks and Caicos Islanders would own more homes, establish more businesses, access more capital, acquire more land, develop greater wealth and exercise greater influence over the economic destiny of their own country. That decision became the defining principle of the People's Contract, the thread connecting every major reform this Administration has undertaken. Recovery was only the beginning. Now we are building ownership, resilience and opportunity.

I turn briefly to the state of our economy today. Before addressing the specific investment my Government is making through the Supplementary Appropriation before this Honourable House, it is important that Members understand the economic environment in which these decisions have been made. No budget, and indeed no supplementary appropriation, should ever be considered in isolation from the broader circumstances confronting our nation. I am pleased to report that the Turks and Caicos Islands delivered a strong

fiscal performance during the first quarter of 2026/2027.

Total revenues reached $153.2 million, exceeding the approved budget by 6% and surpassing collections for the same period last year by 2%. This performance was driven primarily by hotel, restaurant and tourism tax receipts of $47.1 million, reflecting higher than projected stayover visitor arrivals, a powerful testament to the continued strength of our tourism industry.

Government also maintained its disciplined approach to expenditure. Recurrent expenditure totalled $103.7 million, representing an underspend of 23% against approved estimates. Capital expenditure amounted to $3.7 million, advancing priority infrastructure initiatives including the South Caicos dock port development, the digitisation of border services, the Crown Land Project, and the enhancement and restoration of Conch Ground in South Caicos. The blowhards are now falsely suggesting that Turks and Caicos has run out of money. The Government recorded an operating surplus of $48.3 million during the quarter.

Total cash and cash equivalents have increased to $436.6 million, comprising $202 million in the Consolidated Fund, $129 million in the Development Fund, $98 million in the National Wealth Fund, $4.3 million in the National Forfeiture Fund, and $2.5 million in the Destination Enhancement Fund. Our outstanding public debt remains exceptionally low at just $300,000, while the public sector employees' pension fund maintains a balance of $44 million. We are growing and we are looking after our people. These achievements did not occur by chance. They are the result of prudent fiscal management, sound economic policy, and the confidence that investors, businesses and international partners continue to place in the stability of these islands.

This Administration has worked diligently to restore and maintain that confidence, and the numbers confirm that we have succeeded. This strong fiscal position is not an end in itself. It is a means to improving people's lives. A healthy Treasury that cannot respond to the needs of its citizens has failed in its purpose.

It is precisely because we have managed the public finances responsibly that we are now able to respond compassionately. I now turn to the Supplementary Appropriation, and it is compassion anchored in fiscal discipline. The Supplementary Appropriation No. 1 Bill 2026 seeks approval to increase the Government's expenditure envelope by $12.5 million, bringing total expenditure for the financial year from approximately $551 million to $563 million.

The first Supplementary Estimates for 2026/2027 propose a further increase of $12 million in current expenditure to address emerging priorities while continuing to uphold prudent fiscal management. Some will focus exclusively on those figures. They will ask why Government is spending more. That is the wrong question. The proper question is whether these additional appropriations are necessary, affordable and in the national interest. The answer to each of these questions is an unequivocal yes. A Supplementary Appropriation is often viewed simply as an accounting exercise, a technical adjustment to previously approved spending authority. It is far more than that.

It is Parliament responding to changing national circumstances. It is Government exercising the flexibility necessary to address emerging priorities without abandoning fiscal discipline. Budgets are not static documents; they are living instruments of public policy. No responsible Minister of Finance would suggest that every circumstance affecting a nation can be anticipated with perfect precision at the beginning of a financial year.

Responsible governments adjust. Irresponsible governments ignore reality. We live in a world today with all of the uncertainties, where governments need to be more agile, and that requires seriously looking at changing priorities and addressing them. This Government has chosen responsibility. Our approach has always rested upon three fundamental principles: fiscal responsibility, strategic investment and social compassion. These principles are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually reinforcing. Strong public finances create the capacity to respond when citizens face genuine hardship. Strategic investment creates stronger economic growth.

Economic growth generates stronger revenues. Those revenues enable Government to invest further in the people. That is the virtuous circle of responsible governance. The financing of this Supplementary Appropriation is straightforward and transparent. A portion of the additional expenditure will be funded through savings identified during the first quarter of the financial year, arising principally from vacancies across the public service. The balance will be financed from existing cash reserves. There will be no new borrowing, no emergency taxation, no hidden liabilities and no shifting of the burden onto future generations. Even after the proposed drawdown, the Government will retain approximately 140 days of liquid cash coverage, remaining comfortably within the fiscal sustainability benchmarks established under our Public Finance Management Framework.

Reserves are not trophies to be admired. They are strategic assets to be managed responsibly. The relevant question is not whether reserves should ever be used, but whether they are being used judiciously, transparently and for purposes that clearly advance the public interest. I submit that this Supplementary Appropriation satisfies each of those tests.

Let me start by addressing the Cost of Living Relief Programme. The principal measure contained in this Supplementary, and understandably the one that has generated the greatest public discussion, is the establishment of the Cost of Living Relief Fund. Recent fluctuations in global fuel prices have led to significant increases in electricity generation costs, transportation expenses, food prices and the overall cost of living throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands. As a small island economy that relies heavily on imported fuel and imported goods, our country remains particularly vulnerable to developments in international energy markets. Although inflationary pressures have begun to moderate globally, that sustainability is questioned based on the continued state of war in the Middle East between the United States and Iran.

Families throughout these islands continue to feel the lingering

effects of sustained increases in essential household costs. The Supplementary Appropriation provides $10.4 million to establish a dedicated Cost of Living Relief Fund that will provide direct assistance to approximately 16,000 Turks and Caicos Islanders and British Overseas Territory citizens. Its purpose is clearly stated: to address the rising cost of fuel and to help buffer the impact it poses on citizens in relation to electricity, food and other associated necessities.

I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the response from the public has been significant. To date, the programme has received more than 15,000 applications, with more than 4,336 applications approved up to yesterday. It is estimated that the first batch of payments will be processed from 12 August 2026, just in time. There should therefore be no misunderstanding about the purpose of this initiative.

This is not an election promise. It is not a political slogan. It is a fiscal intervention designed to cushion households against extraordinary economic pressures that have largely originated beyond our shores. I have heard it suggested that the payment should have been larger. Every Government would like to do more. Every Minister of Finance would like to provide greater assistance. But public finance is not an exercise in wishful thinking. It is an exercise in balancing competing priorities with finite resources.

Every additional dollar appropriated for one purpose must either be raised through taxation, financed through borrowing, or redirected from another essential public service. I respectfully ask those who make that criticism to answer a simple question: if they believe the payment should have been larger, how would they have financed it? They have not told us. Would they increase taxes on working families? Would they borrow additional money? Would they reduce spending on healthcare or education? Would they weaken public safety? Those are not rhetorical questions. They are the unavoidable realities of governing.

The difference between opposition and administration is precisely this: anyone can demand more spending; responsible governments must explain how that spending will be financed. There is also an important distinction between relief and reform. Relief provides immediate assistance. Reform creates lasting change. A responsible Government does both simultaneously. While we provide targeted relief today, we continue to expand educational opportunities, invest in skills development, support entrepreneurship, increase opportunities for homeownership, and pursue policies designed to increase the participation and ownership of Turks and Caicos Islanders throughout every sector of our economy. The Cost of Living Relief Programme complements, not replaces, those broader reforms. I hope that is very clear.

This is not meant to fix every social issue that our citizens have. This is, as it says, a measure to assist at this time with the uncertainty and the cost of living related to fuel prices. I suspect the Honourable Member with responsibility for energy will speak more specifically to that part of the Bill that relates to the relief we provided on the energy bill itself. I would like to speak to the full package of investments here.

Public discussion has understandably focused on the direct assistance being provided to households. However, this Supplementary Appropriation is far more comprehensive than a single relief programme. It reflects a Government responding simultaneously to immediate needs, institutional priorities and long-term national development. It starts with strengthening national security. Approximately $296,000 is provided for the procurement of a new Criminal Records Management System for the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force following the failure of the previous service provider to remit revenues due to Government, and a further $132,000, previously supported through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, is also provided for the continuing operation of the OTRICS intelligence system, one of the principal intelligence platforms supporting law enforcement throughout these islands. It facilitates intelligence gathering, supports crime analysis, strengthens information sharing, and enhances cooperation with regional and international law enforcement partners.

Public safety cannot be compromised because of an administrative omission. My Government will ensure that our police force possesses the modern tools required to protect our people. Government is restoring $84,000 required to support the continued operation of the girls' home after funding was inadvertently omitted during the budget process. There can be no higher responsibility for any Government than protecting children placed in the care of the state.

The girls' home provides security, stability and hope for young people facing extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Ensuring its continued operation is not simply an expenditure; it is a moral obligation. As I turn to a sustainable energy future, one of the most significant long-term investments in this Supplementary is the allocation of $1.5 million to operationalise the licensing and regulatory framework for renewable energy systems.

Energy security is no longer simply an environmental issue. It is an economic issue, a competitiveness issue and a household affordability issue. Every reduction in energy costs improves the competitiveness of local businesses. Every improvement in energy resilience strengthens our national security. Renewable energy cannot simply emerge without regulation. It requires licensing, technical standards, oversight and consumer protection. This investment lays the institutional foundation necessary for that transition. It is therefore an investment not only in regulation, but in the future competitiveness of our economy.

In strengthening public administration, $510,000 is being reallocated from the National Identification Project to professional and consultancy services under the Ministry of Innovation to advance key digital transformation initiatives. We complain about the delivery of service; this is key to the delivery of public service. An additional $296,000 is provided to implement a new policy records management system to strengthen institutional governance and improve records management. These adjustments improve the accuracy, transparency and efficiency of Government's financial management, and demonstrate a Government willing to identify omissions, correct them openly and return to Parliament for approval in accordance with the law.

It is easy to recognise and identify physical brick-and-mortar structures. It is not so easy to recognise and identify the building blocks of critical infrastructure that would make the administration of Government and the delivery of services easier and more competitive. For those of us here who have the ability to understand and communicate that to the public, I think it is an obligation. In this fiftieth year of ministerial government, anyone who has been around for even half of that would have to acknowledge that, while this is not a perfect economy or a perfect society, we have made giant steps in the last 50 years. I think we do ourselves a dishonour and a disservice when we do not acknowledge that, and when we try to undermine the progress we have made by character assassination and pulling down each other. This Bill supports communities.

It replenishes the Community Enhancement Fund with approximately $1.4 million following urgent reinstatement works undertaken across our communities. Roads, drainage, public facilities and neighbourhood infrastructure are not abstract capital projects; they are the infrastructure that shapes daily life for our citizens. Replenishing this fund ensures that Government retains the capacity to continue responding quickly when communities require assistance.

It is also important to invest in young people. An additional $100,000 is provided to strengthen the Deputy Governor's Summer Internship Programme, and by all means it has been a resounding success. I do not remember the numbers, but a significant number of young people have been put to work over the summer, taking them off the street and providing productive activity for them. There is a saying that an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

To the extent that we can provide healthy work and other outlets for our young people, it should be appreciated. An additional $100,000 is provided to strengthen the Deputy Governor's Summer Internship Programme, supporting student allowances and improving programme delivery. The overwhelming number of applications received this year demonstrates the enthusiasm of our young people to gain meaningful work experience. For many young Turks and Caicos Islanders, this programme represents their first meaningful exposure to public service, professional employment and national leadership.

Leadership is not inherent; it is developed, mentored and encouraged. Every student who gains practical experience today becomes part of the national capacity upon which tomorrow's prosperity will depend. This Budget also honours our democratic heritage. $550,000 is provided to support the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of ministerial government. Fifty years of ministerial government represents far more than an anniversary. It represents five decades of constitutional development, democratic progress and the steady assumption by Turks and Caicos Islanders of greater responsibility for governing their own affairs. When we look around here today and next door, at least when I entered the House of Assembly, we had a cramped space, less than half of the space we have here. We had reams of books where the Clerk at the time was writing down the notes.

When we look around today, 50 years later, and see the electronic recording system, soon to have e-Parliament and all that, we have come a long way and we have done it by ourselves. I think we ought to be proud of what we have accomplished together. Nations that fail to preserve their history, and that is what we are trying to do by commemorating the journey we have reached so far, restoring landmarks and doing all those things necessary to instil pride in our young people, ultimately weaken their identity.

God knows that is not what we need to do. Our democratic journey deserves to be remembered, honoured and studied. I turn now to the question of long-term care. The reason we have been delayed in speaking to the Supplementary is that, in Cabinet yesterday, there was a last-minute request for funding for long-term care.

I understand we have something like 16, 17 or 18 of our sisters and brothers who are in long-term care. Care under NHIP goes for 90 days, and after that long-term care is the responsibility of TCIG. We had a late request for funding to provide for long-term care, and yesterday we approved an initial deposit of $1 million for that purpose. This deserves special mention because it reflects a Government that is not consumed solely by today's challenges but is prepared for tomorrow's realities.

Cabinet has approved an initial $1 million as my Government's first major investment toward establishing a sustainable long-term care solution for the Turks and Caicos Islands. This is another deliberate initiative that we have not left, and will not any longer leave, to chance. Additionally, a further $1 million has been approved to support the ongoing management of Turks and Caicos Islanders requiring specialised long-term medical care overseas whose treatment falls outside the scope of benefits currently provided under the National Health Insurance Programme.

The funding is entirely cost-neutral, financed through the Development Fund following the prudent deferral of capital projects, specifically $730,000 originally allocated for dump site works and $210,000 for police vehicles. These are not cancellations. I want to be very clear: they are reasonable reprioritisations of resources to meet an immediate and pressing human need.

When the process is sufficiently advanced to bring them back on the books, that will happen. Our citizens built this country. They fished these waters. They cultivated this land. They taught our children. They served in our churches and built our communities, often labouring under circumstances far more difficult than those we experience today. They deserve not merely our gratitude; they deserve our care. The demographic profile of the Turks and Caicos Islands is changing.

Our population is ageing. Medical advances mean that people are living longer. Families increasingly face the challenge of caring for elderly relatives, and sometimes not so old elderly, with complex medical and social needs. Responsible governments do not wait until circumstances force their hand. They prepare before crises emerge. This initial allocation signals my Government's commitment to building a modern, compassionate system of care that honours those who contributed throughout their lives to the development of these

islands. This is not simply good policy; it is simply the right thing to do.

It is important to deal with the other part of the context of this Supplementary, and that is the pillars of an island economy, and to record why reprioritisation is important. We cannot just spend from an emotional basis and take the advice of persons who simply say we should write a bigger cheque at this stage. That would undermine the ability to provide further support later when the need arises. The Supplementary Appropriation before us today does not exist in isolation.

It is one expression of a comprehensive national strategy that has been the defining mission of my Administration: the building of an island economy in which Turks and Caicos Islanders participate not merely as employees but as owners, investors, professionals and wealth creators. Not many people would argue against this, and I do not have the time today to point it all out, but if we look at what we have done in InvestTCI, what we are doing for fishermen, and what we are doing to make sure people have access to their land, it is undeniable. That is also why it was important for us to build a wealth fund, because within it currently sits money for the Mortgage Corporation and the credit union.

The establishment of the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation is one of the most transforming public policy initiatives in the modern history of these islands. For decades, homeownership remained beyond the reach of far too many Islanders, not because they lacked discipline or ambition, but because the financial architecture of the country was simply not designed with them in mind. Young professionals return home after completing university, secure steady employment and build promising careers, yet find themselves unable to satisfy the collateral and equity requirements demanded by commercial banks. The Mortgage Corporation was conceived to bridge that gap, not as a competitor to commercial banks, but as a partner in national development.

Its purpose is to assist families who can afford a mortgage but have been excluded by conventional lending practices. The legislative framework has been established. We passed it in the House recently. Financial capitalisation has been secured. Operational systems are being implemented. This is no longer an idea. It is becoming an institution, and institutions endure long after political administrations have passed into history. We owe it to the next generation to ensure that we leave sound, well-regulated institutions for them.

Complementing the Mortgage Corporation project is the revitalisation of the Turks and Caicos Islands Credit Union. While the Corporation provides a pathway to homeownership, the Credit Union provides something equally important: credit, and the ability for Islanders to build wealth through a financial institution they themselves own. When members save, they strengthen an institution that belongs to them. When they borrow, they do so from an institution whose success benefits the wider membership.

When it prospers, the rewards remain with the community. That transforms customers into owners, transactions into partnerships, and finance into community development. Let me remind those who say that this Government has done nothing that we have given every Turks and Caicos Islander on the 2022 voters' list $500. That money is secured in the Sovereign Wealth Fund to be used. The truth is that many Turks and Caicos Islanders have been added to that list now, so eventually, for equity purposes, that will have to be expended.

We have to look beyond the immediate and down the road for the future, and I believe it should be seen as a dividend paid to every person from the success of the economy and the management of the economy. No issue evokes greater emotion in these islands than the question of land. Land is about identity, belonging, history, inheritance, and whether the people of these islands remain masters of their own destiny. My Government has never viewed Crown Land as simply another asset to be disposed of.

We regard it as part of the national patrimony, held in trust for present and future generations. Our comprehensive review of Crown Land administration has streamlined procedures, strengthened accountability, improved transparency, and accelerated the process of applications that had in some cases languished for years. Efficiency is not merely good administration; efficiency is justice, and justice delayed is opportunity denied. There are agents against the empowerment of locals, and they can always find another local to be their proxy.

For entrepreneurship to flourish, opportunity must be fair, rules must be transparent, and processes must be efficient. For far too many years, Island entrepreneurs encountered delays, inconsistency and unnecessarily burdensome licensing processes before they could even begin trading. My Government undertook an ongoing comprehensive reform of the business licensing framework to improve efficiency, strengthen transparency, reinforce compliance and, most importantly, create genuine opportunities for Turks and Caicos Islanders in sectors where they possess the skill and capacity to compete. Every Islander-owned business strengthens this country.

Every restaurant opened by a local family, every construction company established by a young entrepreneur, and every technology start-up or tourism venture created by our people contributes to national resilience and the wider distribution of prosperity. My Government has consistently maintained that true national wealth is not measured by the value of our resorts or the strength of our balance sheet. It is measured by the health of our people, the education of our children, the security of our elderly, and the opportunities available to every Islander regardless of circumstances. On the environment, and again this is all within the context of this Supplementary Budget, if we were to write cheques willy-nilly, we would not be able to focus on all these things.

On the environment, we reject the false choice between economic development and environmental protection. Our turquoise waters, coral reefs, wetlands, mangroves, white sand beaches and biodiversity are not simply beautiful landscapes; they are the economic foundation of our nation. Our sustainability and spatial development framework ensures that development decisions are considered not just individually, but in terms of their cumulative impact on

infrastructure, communities and fragile ecosystems. As a small island developing state, we stand on the frontline of climate change.

Resilience is no longer optional; it is essential. Yesterday, I believe a press statement went out to make the public aware of Government policy in relation to new large-scale development in Providenciales because of the strain it places on infrastructure, which means the Government will have to fork out more money. That speaks to developers internalising every dollar of their own cost.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 03, POLICE

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you. Through the Chair, to give a bit of context, the Attorney General is correct. There are two systems. The OTRIS system is technically a police records system, but it is used by a number of the overseas territories, and the UK Government was funding it, so all of the records are there together, including, perhaps, Cayman, the BVI and Turks and Caicos, all in one record.

What we call the police record system was just a system that queried that system to produce the physical police records when people needed them. Someone would come in or go online and say, I want a physical police record, and then it would query that to see whether or not E.J. Saunders' name is in it.

So they are actually two separate systems. The one that was built cost less than $30,000, and that was the one that you said I was making a lot of noise about. That one was built by a third party out of the United States, and because of the e-commerce platform that it was running on, that developer would get the money and remit it to Government. I think it would go to the police department, then to the Treasury and then on to the police. For some contractual issues, that money stopped being remitted, as the Attorney General said, and they are pursuing and dealing with that as a contract dispute.

The police have now decided that they want to move away from that and get a much better system. That is why you will see the difference in price, from the $30,000 which the original one cost, to one that has more bells and whistles. I think they use this new one across a number of islands in the Caribbean. They are going to achieve a number of things.

They are going to have a system that is way better than the one that was there before, rather than just querying OTRIS. This one can do a lot more, and they are going to move away from the vendor with which the Government has a contractual dispute. That is why this is not going to be just a system.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Okay, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to move now to the police cars. This $226,373, what reduction in vehicles does it represent? How many vehicles, and were they specific to any particular island, whether a vehicle slated for Salt Cay, South Caicos, Grand Turk or Providenciales? This reduction in vehicles, how many vehicles does it represent, and which islands does it impact?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Honourable Attorney General?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

That is it for me on that. Sorry.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Sorry, Honourable Attorney General, do you need some time, or can we proceed? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Basically, the police have just received about 15 new vehicles, so this is like a back order. This money is not permanently being removed. This is basically, again, a timing issue in the procurement process. The intention is to proceed with the acquisition of the vehicles, but the process would allow for some space. In order to expedite this current supplementary,

we moved the money only yesterday in Cabinet to facilitate this, but this is not a permanent removal.

This is just a reprioritization, and you will probably see this resurfacing again in another supplementary the next time around.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. The Chair recognizes the Member for Blue Hills.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe that the amount the Leader of the Opposition quoted refers to personnel emoluments savings instead of vehicles.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, ma'am. I just want to see the exact amount for the police vehicles, but I know it was $200,000-something. $270,000. Yes, okay.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, the question is that the amount of $45,528,667.10 stands part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 04, ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 04, Attorney General's Chambers, $6,000,000.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $6,318,040.94 stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General, and seconded by the Member for Cheshire Hall, that the amount of $6,318,040.94 stand part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $6,318,040.94 stand part of the schedule. All in favour, aye.

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

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 05, JUDICIARY

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 05, Judiciary, $8,698,569.28.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $8,698,569.28 now stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Honourable Premier that the amount of $8,698,569.28 stand part of the schedule. 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:

Madam Chair, just more of a statement. As much has been said about personnel, savings and staff, I want to say that, for

the next quarter later on this year, I will see what happened with the staff, especially in the Judiciary, the Attorney General's Chambers, the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I am concerned about their staff, so I will take note of the staff going forward from the contributions that I heard today.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Do you care to respond? No. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? Are there any further contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $8,698,569.28 stand part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 14, STATUTORY CHARGES

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 14, Statutory Charges, $87,888,166.01.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $87,888,166.01 stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Minister of Innovation that the amount of $87,888,166.01 stand part of the schedule. 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:

Yes, thank you very much. When we look at the National ID Project, it says $510,000 is being taken from the project and put into the recurrent vote, I guess, under professional and consultancy for the National ID Project. Are we saying that we made a mistake when we put it in capital? Or is that where it is supposed to be and we are now just taking it from capital to execute the project, or was a mistake made by placing it in capital?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier? Sorry, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you. I apologize, Madam Chair. Through the Chair, I would say it is probably more of a change in approach. I do not want to go as far as saying a mistake, but when you are doing the budgeting, you try to get the exact figure that you want, and you think you are going to do it a particular way.

Then you start to run into obstacles and you figure that it may be easier to move it into recurrent, to get this particular skill set, or something you might have wanted to do one way but now you are going to do it through a consultancy and that sort of thing. It is a change of approach rather than a mistake. It is very hard to fix these things in January, February or March, when you are doing the budget, knowing exactly how it is going to play out through the next 365 days. I think it is a change in approach, because we are intent on getting the first cards out within the next financial year, that is, FY 2027-28.

This is just a change in approach in how we have been doing this part of it. That is more of it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

If you want, you can debate. Did you get the presentation from the person who is the project manager of this? Ms. Taylor was around doing presentations for all of the Members of Parliament, and I do not know if you were able to sit in on that presentation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much. Can the Minister say whether this will make the procurement process easier, simpler and more straightforward, or whether this is a way to circumvent the procurement process?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Madam Chair?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

I would say this is an attempt to be able to move it faster. I cannot speak for the procurement process. We would hope that this would allow us to move things faster but, as my colleague just pointed out, we would never try to circumvent any process. It is just a different approach that we feel may help us to move faster.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, the question is that the amount of $87,888,166.01 stand part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 16, OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PREMIER AND MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SERVICES

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 16, Office of the Deputy Premier and Ministry of Immigration and Border Services, $25,718,112.38.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $25,718,112.38 now stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Minister of Public Safety that the amount of $25,718,112.38 stand part of the schedule. 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:

Yes, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Looking at the first $500,000 reduction, can the Minister say why the decision was made to move it to Immigration and then to move it from Immigration, the funding for the celebrations?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Essentially, I would refer to the Minister of Home Affairs' original speech, where she outlined all the reasons why we would have made the moves at the time that we did. Thank you very much. Hopefully that suffices.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE - $25,718,112.38

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair, yes, that sufficed for immigration, but why did you move it to immigration in the first place?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you very much. Thanks for the question, Mr Leader of the Opposition. I do not recall at this time exactly why it was originally moved to immigration, but, as the co-chair of the commemorative committee, it would have gone within one of our budget lines, either ours, education or Parliament, as we all formed some of the key stakeholders in the commemorative committee. It is likely because I was the co-chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

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

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I do not know if I should place the question here now, but when did the committee members realise that we would need an increase of 100 per cent, an additional $500,000 for this? When did they realise that? The original was placed from last year at about $500,000; that was the budget. When was it realised that we had to double the budget to $1 million?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you very much for that question. The $500,000 was always meant to be a placeholder until the committee was set up and started to plan some of the activities in full. We knew it was going to be over several weeks or months, but we did not have figures. Once we got closer to what the quotes and figures would be, we decided to lobby for the additional money, and the amount came up to about $500,000 extra.

Anybody knowing about planning events in the Turks and Caicos Islands, for such a great event after 50 years of ministerial governance, would know that $500,000 would never have been enough. It was just a placeholder until we could get a little bit more detail. That is why it doubled, particularly now, and because this is the first supplementary for the year since we passed the budget in April. That is why it is happening now rather than earlier, even though we would have had some numbers sooner.

This is as soon as the supplementary would have come. Thank you.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Premier. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow on from the Deputy Premier as Acting Minister of Culture, in the presentation I said it was six weeks. It is actually a three-month list of activities in August, September and October. As the planning, as the Deputy Premier just said, continued to progress, and as we realised that August was full of activities, September had two weeks full of activities and then October, the cost of $500,000 would not have been sufficient.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

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

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, moving to the other deductions from detention and repatriation, I heard that the Minister said he feels comfortable that we can reduce the lines under these headings, 16.178.32.305 straight down to 32.402. I hope that we will not be back here and I will be saying, I hate to say I told you so, but I told you so.

If the Minister is comfortable with these deductions, I will have to take his word for it that this is possible, that there is no risk to TCIG that these deductions from detention and repatriation can take place. With the additional staff, a lot of us supported and were lobbying for it during the appropriations time, so we want to see the Ministry deal with the additional staff.

If you can guarantee us that this is okay, the borders are protected, there will be no mishaps by us taking this money from detention and repatriation, and that we have coverage, then I will take your word for it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks for the statement-question from the Leader of the Opposition. Of course, we cannot guarantee what will happen in the field in terms of detention and repatriation. As I said during the speech, it is an estimate based on past movements and the trends we are seeing at the time. Even if we kept $200,000 in repatriation, it is possible that it could overshoot and we would still need additional funds, or it could undershoot.

Hopefully we will not have the need for it, but of course we cannot predict the future, so we have to give our best estimates. We know we have the need presently for the additional staffing in the Employment Services Department, so we needed to move that forward because we were trying to get it done from the beginning of the budget cycle, but because of a technicality I believe we could not get it done there and then.

This is the first opportunity to move the funds appropriately to get the additional five staff members for the Employment Services Department.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Premier. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? Are there any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $25,718,112.38 stands part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 54 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENT AND TRADE

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 54, Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade, $39,560,995.71.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $39,560,995.71 stands part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. Motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, that the amount of $39,560,995.71 stands part of the schedule. 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. On this cost of living relief, a lot of persons were questioning the amount and the type of information that they were required to put on the online application. Persons were wondering, if the same system was used for the previous cost of living relief, why the Government did not want to use that one from the previous cost of living relief. What was the decision-making to go in this direction?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

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

I am told that there has been absolutely no change in the information that is required. I do not know where it came from, but I believe we used all of the protocols, including all of the information fields that were required by the previous cost of living relief. The question came up and I inquired, and that is what I was told: nothing was changed on it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, thank you very much, Honourable Premier. I figured you would have got those questions also, but what persons were telling me is that NHIP and annual salary were not required before. Persons say they had to give their annual

salary, and some persons said they had to give their NHIP number.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier?

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

That is the information that I was told was on the previous one, but I do not know if any other member here can add to that.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you. Through the Chair, I am only picking this up because, as the former Minister of Finance and now Minister of Innovation, the portal would come to my attention from time to time. A lot of this information is used for statistical purposes, to get an understanding of the population applying for it and their needs. You want to see what household income is, what age group, whether it is female or male, and the percentage of females and males who are applying for it.

All of this information is less about not giving it to them, but about getting an understanding of citizens needs. I think that is why. You will see them from time to time wanting to answer a question but not having the reliable data. When they go out and get a chance to get the data from the public, particularly during an issue like this, when they know people are going to be filling it out, they would say, let us ask these questions so we can get an understanding of these statistics within the community.

I do not know if that explains it.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

If I could follow on with that, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Also following on from the Premier and the Minister of Innovation, the NIB option and NHIB option are verification tools. A lot of persons thought they had to fill in each box. You had to prove your residency, and these were the options to prove your residency.

NHIB is a good measure to prove it because that is updated monthly. NIB is another good measure to prove it because that is updated monthly based on your contribution. It is not to pierce behind the details. When you check the datasets at NIB and NHIB, you could see that this applicant is resident in the islands because they have made a contribution that is statutorily required.

You had the other option where you could upload the power bill, as long as it was certified, and I think there was one more document. Basically, those requirements on this portal were exactly the same as the last portal, and they were options. You did not have to fill out all of them. The voters register, I think the upgrade that this portal did was actually to put a link to the register.

I do not know about colleagues, but I only had about two people ask me for their voters number, because on the portal the link was there and you could have got that information directly. That was another way to prove that you were a Turks and Caicos Islander, if you did not have your status card. These were just mechanisms to assist the applicant in ensuring that they were eligible, but these options were always on the portal.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? Are there any further contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $39,560,995.71 stands part of the schedule. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 56 - OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 56, Office of the Deputy Governor, $6,003,479.22.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $6,003,479.22 now form part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Minister of Home Affairs that the amount of $6,003,479.22 stands part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Are there any contributions?

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

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Honourable Attorney General.

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

I am grateful, Madam Chair. I just wanted to assist the Committee by providing some information about the recruitment exercises that have been going on and the progress that is being made in addressing vacancies. Madam Chair, I am told that, of the 260 vacancies that existed at the end of June, over 90 of those posts have completed the recruitment exercise and are awaiting persons to take up their posts, and that batch 2, including 74 posts, closed on Sunday, and shortlisting is to be completed, with interviews to be concluded by August 31st. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 56

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Attorney General. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $6,003,479.22 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 57 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS AND CULTURE

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 57, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, $67,386,670.76.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Acting Minister of Education.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $67,386,670.76 now stand part of the schedule. May I have a second?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Acting Education Minister, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, that the amount of $67,386,670.76 stand part of the schedule. 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. To the best of the Acting Minister's ability, can you say how many teaching positions have been recruited or are in the process of being recruited in the batch that was just mentioned? We do not want a situation, come September, where we hear that there is no maths teacher, no science teacher or no other teacher.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Leader of the Opposition, they are in progress, but there is no guarantee. I want to manage expectations. Having sat in this chair substantively, there is no

guarantee that you will not have a vacancy. That is the reality of the situation. It could happen, but it is not the ministry's intention, and the ministry is actively recruiting to make sure that we have a full complement of teachers in the upcoming school year. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

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

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just have one further question on whether any resignations were submitted over the summer and, if so, what are we doing to minimize any resignations happening the week before school opens? Madam Chair, while I am waiting on the Minister, I would just say that the ladies in Parliament today all look beautiful. It is distracting. You yourself, Madam Chair, the Honourable Minister and the Attorney General all really look good.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you kindly, Leader of the Opposition. You know flattery will get you everywhere with me, but as of today no resignations have been issued or tendered to the ministry. There were two declines of offers that were made, but the ministry has already moved to the second set of persons on the list to whom offers are being made. Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $67,386,670.76 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 58 - OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 58, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, $3,392,566.27.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $3,392,566.27 now form part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that the amount of $3,392,566.27 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $3,392,566.27 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 59 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 59, Ministry of Home Affairs, $8,580,821.19.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $8,580,821.19 stand part of the schedule. May I have a second? Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety that the amount of $8,580,821.19 stand part of the schedule. 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. Very quickly, this is just for clarification. This $200,000 did not go across during the budget debate. We are saying that we left it in this ministry when the ministry split up, and now we are correcting that by putting it across.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Madam Chair, the Leader of the Opposition is correct. It is the Department of Religious Affairs money, and Home Affairs is begrudgingly giving them their money back.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $8,580,821.19 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 60 - MINISTRY OF PHYSICAL PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 60, Ministry of Physical Planning and Infrastructure Development, $37,692,731.14.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Acting Minister of PPID.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $37,692,731.14 stand part of the schedule. May I have a second?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Sorry, should I say the number again? Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $37,692,731.14 stand part of the schedule. May I have a second again?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Acting Minister of PPID and seconded by the Minister of Innovation that the amount of $37,692,731.14 stand part of the schedule. 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 PS gave us some information during the appropriations, but I just want to clarify this part, when they said urgent reinstatement coursework. What exactly is urgent reinstatement coursework?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Grateful, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. That is in relation to the government estate, so the various buildings that we own that may have needed remedial works done to them. In order to get those works done, the urgency is expressed. Grateful.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? There being no more contributions, the question is that the amount of $37,692,731.14 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 61 - MINISTRY OF TOURISM, AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, HERITAGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 61, Ministry of Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries, Heritage and the Environment, $26,063,776.28.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Zhavargo Jolly:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $26,063,776.28 now stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, that the amount of $26,063,776.28 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $26,063,776.28 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

But it also speaks to taking away concessions, or not providing any further concessions, to development in Providenciales and placing them where they can benefit other islands, while also ensuring that polluters pay. That policy went out yesterday. There will be public consultation before we decide what else to do. For those of us in public life, I think it is important, particularly on Providenciales, to understand what the Government is trying to do.

We complain about clogged-up roads and all these other things, and we have to do something about it. This is where we need to pull together, because the pressure from developers will continue. It is natural that their interest would be the bottom line and not necessarily the long-term success of the economy or the nation. Some people will come, make money and leave, and the cost of development will outstrip the benefits from it.

We are cognisant of that, and we are taking steps to make sure that does not happen. I will speak in my ministerial statement on healthcare, but my Government has approached the matter from a simple premise: quality healthcare should never depend on which island one lives on, nor upon the size of one's income. We have continued strengthening our systems through investment in facilities, equipment, specialist services, workforce development, and improved access across the archipelago. But healthcare is not simply about hospitals.

It is about prevention, wellness and early intervention, ensuring that our citizens live longer, healthier and more productive lives. I am getting to the end. On education, Mr. Speaker, every investment we have made in school infrastructure, scholarships, teacher recruitment, modernised learning environments, technical and vocational training, and higher education opportunities is an investment in tomorrow's economy. Education is not expenditure; it is investment.

Every scholarship awarded today becomes tomorrow's engineer, physician, entrepreneur or member of this Honourable House. I am going to say something against the background of our 50th anniversary, which I spoke to earlier, and within the context of our constitutional advancement. Mr. Speaker, there comes a moment in the constitutional journey of every people when they must ask themselves a simple but profound question: who are we, and what future do we seek to build for ourselves? I do not want to be critical of the United Kingdom Government, but they have had many changes in the last several years, and every time there has been a change, it has impacted us. We end up dealing with different new people.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 62 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 62, Ministry of Health and Human Services, $112,513,996.10.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Acting Minister of Health.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $112,513,996.10 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Acting Minister of Health and seconded by the Minister of Home Affairs that the amount of $112,513,996.10 stand part of the schedule. 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. To the Minister, we see the reallocation of the Senior Crown Counsel from the Contracts Management Unit to the Ministry of Health. Is this a sign that the Contracts Management Unit is being dissolved as the contract with the hospital is being terminated, or will it remain there to manage other contracts?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

No. It was just moved there to have the position in a more central spot in the ministry to provide more support in that area.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

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

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Just one follow-up, Madam Chair. With all the talks of contracts, are there any plans to strengthen the Contract Management Unit?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Yes, that department is being strengthened. There are positions that are being filled now, and a position for deputy in that department is going out, so the department is being strengthened.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Are there any further contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $112,513,996.10 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 63 - PARLIAMENT

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 63, Parliament, $4,895,000.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION NO. 1 BILL 2026

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

And who have to get on a learning curve before they can even understand the overseas territories and their relationship, and who have their own ideas about how these islands should be managed. At some stage, we have to ask the question: who are we and what future do we seek to build for ourselves? That requires advancing our Constitution. The Constitution question does not belong to any one person or any one party, and if we fight over it, we will not make any progress. If there is a tit-for-tat over the Constitution, everybody loses.

One party comes in today, or one leader takes over, and immediately there is a regressive step towards four years ago or 10 years ago, instead of looking forward. All of the Overseas Territories are focused and engaged with C24 and demanding that the United Kingdom explain its intention to C24 in relation to the Overseas Territories. Every member in this Parliament is now elected, and so it should be, because that is the way it is in the UK and in any progressive Parliament.

I want to make it clear while I am on the floor in this House, in

front of everybody, because there is a narrative going around that there was an application on my part to seek to expand the term limit. Let me say that is a diabolical untruth. Nothing like that ever happened. If we are going to advance as a nation, we will have to advance together. I do not want to say much more than that today, but suffice it to say that this question is not born out of impatience. It is not born out of confrontation.

It is born out of confidence, confidence earned through responsible government, sound financial management, democratic maturity, and the demonstrated capacity of our people to govern their own affairs with wisdom, accountability and integrity. We have shown that over the last 50 years. We have had our problems, but we are stronger for them. My Government values its constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom.

Our objective is not confrontation, but partnership built upon mutual respect that recognises both our shared history and our growing national capacity. And yes, there will come a time when that will change too. We seek a constitutional relationship that reflects the realities of the 21st century, provides greater local responsibility, recognises the growing maturity of our institutions, and enables decisions affecting our future to be made increasingly by those who live that future every day. Mr. Speaker, nationhood is not created by constitutional documents alone.

Every balanced budget strengthens our nationhood. Every school we build strengthens our nationhood. Every family purchasing its first home strengthens our nationhood. Every honest act of public service strengthens our nationhood. Constitutional advancement is therefore not the beginning of nation-building; it is the recognition of nation-building already achieved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The responsibility in government and the duty of this Parliament are clear. Public debate, Mr. Speaker, is the lifeblood of any healthy democracy. This Administration has never feared scrutiny.

On the contrary, we welcome informed criticism because it strengthens both Government and Parliament. But there is an important distinction between disagreement and dismissal, between proposing an alternative course of action and simply asserting that more should have been done. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve more than slogans. They deserve serious policy discussion.

They deserve honesty about the difficult choices that every government must make. When additional expenditure is proposed, responsible government must answer three questions: is the expenditure necessary, is it affordable, and is it in the national interest? Throughout this debate, I have demonstrated that the measures contained within this Supplementary Appropriation satisfy each of these tests. The need has been identified. The financing has been disclosed.

The public benefit has been clearly explained. Government must also be judged not by isolated decisions but by the consistency of its record. A single appropriation does not define fiscal policy. What matters is whether there is a coherent pattern of responsible decision-making over time. I respectfully submit that the record of this Administration speaks for itself. We inherited the economic devastation of a once-in-a-century pandemic. Despite those challenges, the Turks and Caicos Islands has remained fiscally stable, continued to invest in infrastructure, strengthened healthcare and education, expanded opportunities for Islanders, preserved investment confidence, and maintained one of the strongest fiscal positions in the region. Those achievements were not accidental.

They were the product of disciplined policy, careful financial management, and a willingness to make decisions based on evidence rather than expediency. The Bill before us today is entirely consistent with that record. I also wish to acknowledge the dedicated public servants whose work has made this Supplementary Appropriation possible: the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury, the Strategic Policy Planning Unit, the Budget Office, the Accountant General, accounting officers across government, the Deputy Governor and the Public Service, and Cabinet colleagues. Their professionalism deserves the appreciation of this House.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this Budget is about stewardship today and opportunity tomorrow. As I bring my remarks to a close, I must return to the principle that has guided this Administration since the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands first entrusted us with the responsibility of governing.

Governments are temporary; institutions endure. Budgets come and go; nations are built over generations. The decisions we take in this Honourable House are therefore about much more than the figures contained in an Appropriations Bill. They are about the kind of country we intend to leave to those who follow us. Will we leave public finances that are strong enough to withstand future uncertainty? Will we leave institutions capable of meeting the demands of a modern economy? Will we leave opportunities that allow Turks and Caicos Islanders to prosper in their own homeland? Will we leave a society that cares for its elderly, protects its children, and supports families during difficult times? The Supplementary Appropriation answers each of these questions in the affirmative. When viewed in its entirety, the Bill is not simply about expenditure. It provides meaningful assistance to households experiencing cost-of-living pressure.

It strengthens law enforcement through modern technology and intelligence capabilities. It protects vulnerable children entrusted to the care of the State. It prepares a regulatory framework for a more resilient and sustainable energy future. It supports communities through timely infrastructure improvements. It invests in the next generation of public servants and national leaders. It honours 50 years of ministerial government and the democratic journey that has shaped our islands. It begins the important work of preparing for the long-term care needs of an ageing population. Taken together with the broader programme of the People's Contract, the Mortgage Corporation, the credit union, land reform, business licence reform, constitutional advancement, and sustained investment in education, healthcare and the environment, these measures reflect a Government that is planning not only for the next quarter or the next financial year, but for the next generation.

Our nation has come a long way. We have overcome hurricanes. We have weathered global financial uncertainty.

We have emerged from a once-in-a-century pandemic. We have navigated inflationary pressures affecting economies around the world. Throughout these challenges, the resilience of our people has never faltered. Neither has the determination of this Government to govern responsibly. Let no one say that these islands must settle for less than their potential, and let no one suggest that our aspirations are too ambitious.

Let no one underestimate what a determined people united behind a clear vision can accomplish. Ours is not a story of limitation. It is a story of possibility, resilience and courage; a people who refuse to believe that the future must look like the past, and a Government committed to leaving behind a country stronger, more prosperous, more just and more firmly in the hands of its own people than the one it inherited. From recovery to renewal, from stability to opportunity, from aspiration to achievement, from promise to progress.

I therefore commend the Supplementary Appropriation No. 1 Bill 2026, and the First Supplementary Estimates for the Financial Year 2026-27 to this Honourable House, and respectfully invite Honourable Members, regardless of political affiliation, to join in supporting these measures, not as a victory for any government or party, but as an investment in our country and the people we have all been elected to serve.

May God continue to bless these beautiful Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 63 - PARLIAMENT

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $4,895,261.95 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that the amount of $4,895,261.95 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $4,895,261.95 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 64 - OFFICE OF THE PREMIER AND PUBLIC POLICY

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 64, Office of the Premier and Public Policy, $7,471,205.25.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $7,471,205.25 stand part of the schedule. 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 Home Affairs that the amount of $7,471,205.25 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $7,471,205.25 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye.

Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 65 - NATIONAL SECURITY SECRETARIAT

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 65, National Security Secretariat, $14,363,470.77.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $14,363,470.77 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General and seconded by the Member for Cheshire Hall that the amount of $14,363,470.77 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? Any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that the amount of $14,363,470.77 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

HEAD OF EXPENDITURE 66 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY, SOCIAL WELFARE AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 66, Ministry of Public Safety, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, $30,061,239.59.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $30,061,239.59 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety, seconded by the Minister of Home Affairs, that the amount of $30,061,239.59 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $30,061,239.59 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 67, National Land Secretariat, $6,025,752.85.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $6,025,752.85 stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, that the amount of $6,025,752.85 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $6,025,752.85 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 68, National Audit Office, $2,621,694.50.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the amount of $2,621,694.50 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General, seconded by the Minister of Home Affairs, that the amount of $2,621,694.50 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $2,621,694.50 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 69, Ministry of Innovation, Technology and Energy, $13,889,899.95.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $13,889,899.95 now stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Innovation, seconded by the Minister of Public Safety, that the amount of $13,889,899.95 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $13,889,899.95 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Head of Expenditure 70, Office of the Cabinet Secretariat, $410,691.67.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Attorney General.

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

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $410,601.67 now stand as part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Attorney General, seconded by the Member for Cheshire Hall, that the amount of $410,601.67 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $410,601.67 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Schedule 2, Development Fund, Capital Expenditure, Head of Expenditure 14. Total expenditure: $563,301,413.40.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that the sum of $563,301,413.40 stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety, that the amount of $563,301,413.40 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $563,301,413.40 stand part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Madam Clerk.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION NO. 1 BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier, and thank you for your presentation on the Supplementary Appropriation 2026-27 Bill 2026. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this Bill. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognises the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Clerk:

Schedule 2, Development Fund Capital Expenditure, Head of Expenditure 14, Total Development Fund, $56,519,143.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION NO. 1 BILL 2026

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That presentation by the Honourable Premier was longer than his budget speech, so I did not know we were doing that, or else I would have prepared a 10 or 12-hour speech also. That one was twice as long as his initial budget speech. I rise to make my contribution to this supplementary, or should I say revised supplementary, Bill. Before I do, let me offer words of condolence to all the bereaved families of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

There are a number of people, and hopefully I will have all the names before the session finishes. If we reach the two-minute speeches, I will have all those names. I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Health. I want to say a special good afternoon to all those listening throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands, especially those from my constituency of Grand Turk

South and Salt Cay. I am always happy to welcome those members of the Civil Service from various ministries here in the House of Assembly, as this is part of your work also, to see what your Ministers and policymakers are presenting so that you can defend their points and advance them.

As always, we welcome Mr. Williams. We are always happy to have you inside the House of Assembly. Thank you very much for being here this evening. I was very excited to get up at first, but it went on and on, and I had to make so many notes.

It is always good speaking after the Premier because he always gives you more things to respond to. If you are someone like me who likes to respond and dig deeply into exactly what the person says on the floor, you would enjoy that. I appreciated the text that our Chaplain read today, Luke 12:48, where Jesus shared the parable about being a faithful and wise servant. The phrase, to whom much is given, much is required, means that people who have been given great advantages and great power have a high duty to perform and to act responsibly.

I put it to you that this Government has been given great responsibility. They won with the biggest margin that any Government has ever won in the Turks and Caicos Islands. With that great victory, people expect greatness from them. Sadly, they have not received greatness. They have not received goodness. They have not received rightness. They have not received okayness. They have not received any of those things.

As we know from the information provided in the supplementary budget, the budget is to address, or should be to address, emerging needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility. From the information provided, the total request was $12.5 million, with an additional $1.5 million, making it about $14 million. We were told that this supplementary was driven by the first quarter fiscal performance exceeding expectations. Is that what is really driving this supplementary? Is it driven by our revenues exceeding expectations? We were told that the operating surplus was $48.3 million for quarter one. The Premier mentioned increased revenue primarily from tourism, but he did not mention the next one.

The Premier has a point of order.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I move that $56,519,143 stand part of the schedule. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, that the amount of $56,519,143 stand part of the schedule. 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 the amount of $56,519,143 stand part of the schedule.

All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk. Honourable Members, we now turn to the clauses. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Clause 1, Short Title and Commencement.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Clause 1 stand 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 Innovation, that Clause 1 stand part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. 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.

Clerk:

Clause 2, Further issue of funds from consolidated fund variation and reallocation authorized.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Clause 2 stand 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 Public Safety, that Clause 2 stand part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Clause 2? There being no contributions, the question is that Clause 2 stand part of the bill.

All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Clause 3, Reduction of funds from development fund authorized.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Clause 3 now stand part of the bill. Do I have a seconder? The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Innovation, 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 to Clause 3? There being no 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.

Clerk:

Clause 4, Section 5 of Supporting Schedules to the Estimates of Revenues and Expenditures forms part of Act.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Clause 4 stand 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 Public Safety, 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 to Clause 4? There being no 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. Thank you, Honourable Members. We have reached the end of consideration of the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026, and I now suspend to allow the Speaker to take the Chair. This session is now suspended.

REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Premier, do you have a point of order?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No. I just want to make a correction. The budget envelope is $12.5 million. The $1.5 million you spoke about took place through compensating adjustments within the $12.5 million, so it is not $14 million. Thank you very much.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament now resumes its sitting. Please be seated. Honourable Deputy Speaker.

REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Premier for that. I was a little concerned and confused about it. We have heard about tourism performing above expectations, but what else performed above expectations? Work permits, Mr. Speaker. Work permits remain one of our main earners.

Last year, we gave out a record number of work permits, and already for the first quarter of this year we have exceeded by so much what we gave in the first quarter of last year, and almost the whole of last year. That should be alarming. The next alarming factor in this budget is vacancies: vacancies in just about every programme, across government. Last year, vacancies were a big issue, and we closed the year with some 200 or 240 vacancies. If you knew you had all those vacancies and all the terms of reference and resumes had been collected, all you were waiting on was for the budget to pass so that you could execute.

The first quarter of this financial year has already finished. We are now approaching the second month of the second quarter, and what are we hearing about? Savings and vacancies. That is concerning. The Premier went back to 2021, so that door is open. I feel sorry for the people he was calling blowhards. I know he was not referring to anyone on this side, but he should not be so hard on his people.

I apologise on his behalf. Mr. Speaker, he mentioned 2021 and what he did then, and it reminded me of the opening battle in the movie Gladiator. The battle had been won, and the emperor's son rode up asking whether he had missed the battle. His father told him he had not missed the battle; he had missed the entire war.

I put it to the Honourable Premier that, when he talks about the COVID years, he missed the entire war. He was not in the battle. He was not in those long Cabinet meetings that started at six in the morning and finished at eleven at night. He was not there when we had to figure out safe periods for tests, whether four days, six days, three days or two days.

He was not there when we had to read thousands of pages of literature and present that. He was not there when decisions had to be made about putting on curfews, lifting curfews, closing and opening, who could work, and how we would keep construction going so the country would not close down.

He was not there. That battle was hard, and although they like to downplay the former PDM administration's time, history will exalt us. That history is there. You cannot change history. I get passionate when I talk about that because I know how hard it was, not just for the Turks and Caicos Islands but for the whole world. It was a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. The last time the world saw anything like that was the Spanish flu. The Premier also said he brought the country through hurricanes.

Which hurricanes did you bring the people through, Honourable Premier?

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Good evening again, Mr. Speaker. The committee is pleased to report that it has completed its scrutiny of the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026, with no amendments. I now turn these proceedings over to you, Mr. Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 BILL 2026 - THIRD READING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Deputy Speaker for chairing the Committee of Supply and overseeing the passage of the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still on Orders of the Day, and we will now have the third reading of bills and the third reading of the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move pursuant to Standing Order 99 that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 be read a third time. Do I

have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services that the Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 be now read a third 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 Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Act 2026 and comes into operation on the day of publication in the Gazette.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move pursuant to Standing Order 99 that the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 do now pass. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2025 - SECOND READING

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 Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 do now pass. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Members, the Bill entitled Supplementary Appropriations 2026-2027 Bill 2026 do now pass. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still on Orders of the Day and at the second reading of bills. We will now have the second reading of the Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025.

The Chair recognises the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Mr. Speaker. Good evening once again. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred to the next sitting of the House. May I have a seconder?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

CUSTOMS AMENDMENT BILL 2026 - SECOND READING

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 Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred to another sitting of the House. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable Members, we are still on the second reading of bills, and we will now have the second reading of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister for Immigration and Border Services. Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

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

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that the Bill entitled Customs Amendment Bill 2026 be now read a second time. 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. Mr. Speaker, I rise to debate the Customs Amendment Bill 2026, a strategic, progressive and forward-looking piece of legislation that strengthens the integrity of our Border Force customs administration, enhances the protection of government revenue and positions the Turks and Caicos Islands alongside the world's leading customs administrations. At the heart of this amendment is the introduction of a new provision, section 93A, which establishes the legal authority for Border Force to conduct post-clearance audits, commonly known throughout the international customs community as PCA. This is not a new concept.

It is an internationally recognised customs tool employed by advanced customs administrations across the globe. Rather than relying solely on inspections at ports of entry, post-clearance audits allow Customs and Border Force officers to verify the accuracy of declarations after goods have been released by examining business records, accounting systems, invoices, contracts, electronic records, correspondence and any other documentation relevant to an import or export transaction. Let me be absolutely clear: this bill is not aimed at the overwhelming majority of importers and businesses who comply with the law every day.

The vast majority of our business community conducts its affairs honestly, pays the duties that are due and contributes significantly to our economy. They deserve recognition, not punishment. This legislation is directed instead at those relatively few instances where declarations are inaccurate, incomplete, misleading or deliberately false, resulting in the underpayment of duties, taxes, levies, fees or other lawful charges owed to the Government. One of the most consequential provisions of this bill is that the Border Force will now have the authority to conduct post-clearance audits for up to five years after the date of importation or exportation.

That is a significant enhancement. It creates an important deterrent and reinforces the principle that compliance does not end when goods leave the port. Businesses will understand that declarations remain subject to verification and that proper records must be maintained because the Border Force may review those transactions years after clearance. This is not unusual.

It is standard practice throughout modern customs administrations worldwide. The bill also empowers authorised Border Force officers, acting within the law, to examine records, access relevant information, enter business premises during normal working hours and verify the correctness of declarations relating to valuation, tariff classification, origin, quantity, duties, taxes, levies, charges and any applicable tariff treatment. These are balanced, reasonable and internationally accepted powers. They are not extraordinary powers; they are necessary powers.

Without them, Border Force cannot effectively protect government revenue or ensure that honest businesses compete on a level playing field. If a competitor avoids paying the proper duties through false declarations, while the honest broker pays all duties due, the honest broker is placed at a competitive disadvantage. This bill helps to level the playing field. Across the Caribbean and across the world, governments are seeking responsible ways to improve revenue collection without placing additional burdens on law-abiding taxpayers.

This bill does exactly that. It simply ensures that existing legal obligations are honoured fairly, consistently and transparently. The bill also introduces meaningful consequences for those who knowingly fail to meet these obligations. Where underpayments arise because declarations are false, incomplete, misleading or otherwise incorrect, offenders may be liable upon conviction to a fine of $5,000 or three times the value of the goods, whichever is greater.

That is a clear and deliberate deterrent. It reinforces the importance of honesty in international trade, protects government revenue and protects honest traders from unfair competition. Another significant provision makes it abundantly clear that the release of goods by Border Force officers does not constitute final acceptance of the accuracy of a declaration. Clearance facilitates trade; it does not extinguish accountability.

Border Force retains the authority to review declarations, reassess liabilities and recover revenue where subsequent audits identify discrepancies. That principle is recognised throughout the international customs community and is fundamental to an effective post-clearance audit programme. As Minister responsible for Immigration and Border Services, I place on record my sincere appreciation for my executive team, the Director General of Border Force, the corporate services team, our compliance and customs professionals, the Attorney General's Chambers, led by our esteemed Attorney General, the legislative drafters, policy advisers and every public officer who contributed to the preparation of this important bill. I also thank my Cabinet colleagues and all Members of Parliament who will support this bill for the betterment of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Their dedication reflects the professionalism and forward-thinking approach that continues to transform Border Force into a modern institution capable of meeting the evolving demands of border security, trade facilitation and revenue protection. Border Force today is far more than an agency responsible for ports of entry. Modern Border Force is a guardian of our economy, a protector of government revenue, a trade facilitator, a compliance authority, a partner in national security and an institution committed to ensuring that our borders remain secure while legitimate commerce continues to flourish. The introduction of post-clearance audits is another milestone in that transformation.

It equips Border Force to identify revenue leakage, strengthens voluntary compliance, improves fairness across the trading community and reinforces public confidence that our customs system operates with integrity, transparency and accountability. The people of these islands expect us to protect public funds, strengthen our institutions and govern responsibly. This bill delivers on each of those expectations. It is practical, progressive, internationally aligned and unquestionably in the best interests of our Turks and Caicos Islands.

I therefore commend the Customs Amendment Bill 2026 to this Parliament for debate and respectfully urge all Honourable Members to support its passage. May God continue to bless these beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands. Thank you.

REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

What hurricanes?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

You do not know anything about Irma and Maria destroying all the Salt Islands? You do not know what it is for one hurricane to come at the weekend and, before people could even put up tarpaulin, the next hurricane was upon them? He was not there, Mr. Speaker. We were running the Government at that time and had to figure out how to do things. The Premier said he welcomed criticism. Let us go back to 2021.

As Minister of Health, twice a week I would go before the press. Those who could not be there in person would ask questions on the internet, and I would let them ask question after question until they ran out. I never asked them to send their questions in advance. If I have responsibility for a ministry, I need to know what is going on.

What is happening now? There is a so-called press conference and people come with scripted questions for which answers have already been prepared. It appeared to me that those questions were given beforehand. That is not the way. If you want to answer the people, you stand before them and let them ask whatever they want to ask. Let us get to the figures.

The Premier said in his contribution that he is doing everything to support the police and ensuring that they have all the tools. Yet, with one hand, the Government says it wants to provide the police with all the tools, and with the other it is taking away $270,000 worth of vehicles from the police. Are you providing them with all the tools, or are you taking away $270,000 for police vehicles? We also heard that almost $300,000 is required for a new police records system. I am wondering what is going on.

We just paid a lot of money for a new police records system. The Minister for Innovation has spoken about digital police records in ministerial statements and in the budget, but now we have to scrap the programme, go out to tender again and bring in someone new. What is going on? The public does not know. We heard at Appropriations about problems with the old provider and money owing to TCIG.

Who entered into that deal? Who negotiated on behalf of TCIG and the Ministry? It looks like another bad deal for the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Premier bragged that the Turks and Caicos Islands have only about $330,000 of debt, and rightly so. But this may be the last time in our history we are able to say that. What I see on the horizon, especially in relation to the health situation, suggests that we will have more debt than that in the coming months. If the hospitals are saying they want to break their contract and we have nine years left, do we have to pay them out? We pay around $20 million for InfraCo, $20 million for ClinCo and additional millions in NHIP. If roughly $50 million a year is paid under that contract, and there are nine years left, that is almost half a billion dollars before interest, lawyers, penalties or negotiations.

That is what is being done to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. We are bragging about $330,000 of debt today while there is a possibility of half a billion dollars in debt alone, not including other claims against Government. On the Ministry of Health, it needs an additional $1 million for long-term care. Nobody can knock that.

Anything over 90 days is dealt with by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry budgeted $400,000 for long-term care, and at Appropriations we asked whether that was enough. We were told they would make do. But $400,000 is almost just for the original four patients, and there are 14 more patients. The average cost is around $20,000 to $24,000 per month, or about $240,000 to $280,000 a year per patient. For 18 patients, the Ministry realistically needs about $3.6 million on the low end. We hope persons recover.

There appear to be only two ways to come off long-term care: recover or expire. The $1 million is appreciated, but it is not enough. On treatment abroad, I asked what family members who accompany patients receive. I am told that they get $200. If you go to Colombia for three weeks or to Jamaica for five weeks with a loved one, you get $200, and even that is not paid before departure. I know members will say that was the case when I was Minister, but I brought policy changes to Cabinet more than once. I was told that an actuarial report had to be done before figures could be changed. Those records are in Cabinet.

Members can check them. Two hundred dollars is not enough. It cannot get you a good hotel these days. Many people who accompany loved ones do not have access to extra money and have to ask friends or relatives for help while abroad. On treatment abroad, the Dominican Republic is the only place where there is a formal arrangement for someone to pick you up and take you to your hotel, hospital and appointments. If you go to Jamaica, Cayman, Colombia or the United States, there is no such formal arrangement. That also was in the proposal. The Premier spoke about protecting the environment.

If he cares so much about the environment, why is $750,000 being taken away from waste management? He cannot say he cares about the environment while taking money from solid waste management. Turning to the Ministry of Immigration and Border Services, we saw the removal of $500,000 for meetings and conferences for the 50th anniversary celebrations, transferred to the Department of Culture. This has been kicked around. Initially, the money was supposed to be with Parliament.

Then we heard it was being taken from Parliament and placed

with the Ministry of Immigration. Now it is being taken from Immigration and placed with Culture. Does the Government know what it is doing? Is this the final movement? Nobody on that side seems sure. Having moved it here, there and everywhere, the Government is now coming back for an additional $500,000.

What is the breakdown? What are we getting for spending $1 million of the people's money on the celebration? We want it to be big and grand, and we understand the importance of recognising those who came before us, but tell us why the budget is being increased by 100 per cent. We also saw more than $150,000 being transferred from detention and repatriation. I am not comfortable with that. I live here.

My family and friends are here. I do not think that money should be touched because, on one night, we may need it. This is only the second quarter. I also spoke about work permits. We processed 25,018 work permits last year and have already increased beyond expectations. We are getting intelligence software for the police, but taking away their vehicles. Recruitment and employment services are receiving an additional $150,000, and the $100,000 for the Deputy Governor's Office is excellent because we knew the apprenticeship programme would not have enough funding. On the $1.4 million to replenish the Community Enhancement Fund,

I want to see where the original $3.4 million went. I cannot see tangible enhancements. What enhancements have taken place? On the cost of living, $10.4 million is being allocated, and more than 15,000 citizens have applied. When I checked the dashboard today, 15,546 had applied: 10,328 status card holders and 5,218 BOTCs. Just over 5,000 had been approved and some 11,000 were awaiting approval. The Premier said that, if we believed the payment should be larger, we should say how we would fund it. I am one of those who said during the budget debate that the war in Ukraine and other global pressures were not ending soon and that we should budget for a stimulus. The Premier said that was irresponsible.

He asked how we would fund it. I would not have purchased some of the properties. The Family Care Medical Building alone was $12 million. If the current stimulus is $10.5 million and gives people $500, that additional $12 million could have meant another $750 for people. The Temple Trust purchase of $6.43 million, excluding renovations, could have given people more. The property in Wheeland was another $6 million. Other properties added more.

Just by not purchasing those properties now, money could have gone to the people who really need it. We have to put priorities first, and the people are the priority. Members will ask what we did when we were in office. This Government criticised the former PDM administration for giving stimulus to hotel workers on work permits during the pandemic, when the whole world was shut down.

But what has this Government done? Look at the electricity subsidy. Is it only for Turks and Caicos Islanders? No. It is for residential customers. That means anyone on a work permit, PRC, residence permit or any other status who pays a bill under the threshold can benefit from the people's money. The same people who criticised us for helping some hotel workers in a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic are doing the same and more.

The Government could have done the work and made the subsidy for Turks and Caicos Islanders first. If I were in another country, I would expect that country's government to look after its people first. Our money must be used for our people first. Instead, the easy way was taken: give it to everybody.

Those Turks and Caicos Islanders whose bills go over $1,500 in the summer, when children are home and air conditioning is running, get nothing, while others on permits may benefit. Many of our people in the middle class are not poor enough to benefit from social benefits and not rich enough to withstand economic pressures. They suffer. I have seen through budget reductions, rescoping, reimagining, refinancing and all the other terms used that this Government is hamstringing the civil servants.

Civil servants appear before us in Appropriations and other meetings, and I feel sorry asking them questions. They need resources and manpower. Yet throughout government there are savings on staff: police, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Judiciary, the Office of the Deputy Premier, Immigration, Education, schools, the Youth Department, special education and others. In the second month of the second quarter, we are seeing savings on staff.

The Government had a chance to do right by our people with this subsidy. It could have done the work and given Turks and Caicos Islanders a greater subsidy. I do not know which Minister in Cabinet decided that this was a good idea. I am concerned about the Government being efficient.

Too many departments will suffer from these cuts. Education will be hamstrung. Policing will be hamstrung by the loss of vehicles. We know certain vehicles in the police fleet need to be replaced, and how critical vehicles are for police response. Culture is receiving money, but not to perform its original mandate; it is being given responsibility for a project that has been moved around and pushed to it at the last hour. The Attorney General's Chambers, the Judiciary and the DPP are suffering. Across government, departments are being hamstrung by the decisions of this PNP Government, specifically the Cabinet members, because the backbenchers may only know about this when we know. Leadership is about priorities.

Budgets are statements of values, and from this budget we can see the values: soft on immigration, defunding immigration, defunding the police, defunding the environment, defunding education, defunding repatriation and defunding the public service. How can civil servants perform when you are defunding them? How can it be fair that taxpayers' money is being used to fund persons who are not Turks and Caicos Islanders, whose status we do not know? You cannot campaign for two election cycles criticising stimulus to non-Turks and Caicos Islanders and then come in 2026 and do far more with the people's money. If the civil service fails, it will be because of these issues. You are defunding civil servants and

expecting them to perform.

Our people deserve more. I thank my Honourable Member for the background work and information, and our new leader for keeping the Government's feet to the fire. I am grateful to the civil servants who come to the House and explain the situation honestly. The Premier asked how we would fund a larger stimulus.

The $12 million for the Family Care building could have doubled the amount. The Temple Trust could have increased it further. The Conch Farm and other lands could have helped even more, and it could have been staggered throughout the year because the oil crisis is not going away. People need help now.

This supplementary, although the Government is trying to make it sound good, is failing our people and failing our civil servants. Thank you very much. Our people deserve more, and in due time we will give our people more.

CUSTOMS AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your presentation of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this bill, and the Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to the Customs Amendment Bill 2026. Before I do, just in case we do not get to two-minute speeches, I want to send words of condolence to the Misick family, especially Trevor, Hillary, Bridget, Holly, Keisha and all the family, from myself and from the Honourable Member for The Bight.

I saw a message saying that Aki from Good Street, Miss Sarah's son, may have passed today. I am not 100% sure, but someone sent me that text, Mr. Speaker. I am sure the Honourable Deputy Premier and Honourable Minister will know. Yes, it is true. We want to send words of condolence to the bereaved families. Mr. Speaker, this bill is very much appreciated, as it is modernising customs collection here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. However, I have a few concerns.

I always look beyond what we see and beyond what is being said. If this can take place years after the goods have been released to you, or years after you have put in your declaration, what is the red flag? Who triggers this? Who is the whistleblower? How does the process happen? Do you one day decide to come to my shop and say, a year ago we gave Mr. Astwood these goods and we are going to come behind him? Or, going through the system and conducting an audit, do you realise that something is off from documents from a year ago or two years ago and come behind me? Or is it someone in the general public?

Who blows the whistle? How are these proceedings triggered? We want that to be identified and clarified. We are not speaking against the bill; we just need to know how the proceedings are triggered. What is the mechanism to get the investigation started? I did not hear that in the contribution from the Minister. Is there an appeals tribunal or some way for citizens to appeal if they feel they are being wrongly targeted? Can they say, ' I want to appeal what you say I have done as an incorrect entry.

I have proof that this is correct. I have proof that I did not do anything wrong. I have proof that there is no foul play, and I want to challenge this,' without going to the court system? Is there any way for the citizen who feels that he has been wrongly identified as someone who is defrauding the Government to appeal? Those things need to be clarified. Who triggers it? How is the mechanism triggered? What triggers this post-clearance audit? Is it regular daily work, with someone reviewing documents for the past year, two years or three years? What happens if I am no longer in business? If there was a post-clearance audit of A&E Operations and A&E no longer exists and is off the books, who do you come behind? Is it clear that it is me as the proprietor? If the company is off the books and you identify that, and my company closed down within a year or two, who is liable if the company does not exist anymore?

Those things need to be clarified in any bill or ordinance going forward. Yes, it is a good thing to modernise customs laws and customs collection and to increase Government revenue, but we need to clarify these things so that it is properly spelled out, so that our people will not be wrongly targeted.

Our people should have an appeals mechanism if they feel that they are being unjustly pursued. Again, we have to identify exactly how this is triggered: from hearsay, from my next-door neighbour, from my competitor, from someone in the office, or from someone in Cabinet. How are the mechanisms triggered? With that, Mr. Speaker, I await clarification from the Minister. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs for her contribution.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Evening again, Mr. Speaker. You will see that my microphone is going in and out, so I will not be terribly long. It is messing with my OCD, blinking at me every two minutes. Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the amazing people of Leeward and Long Bay to lend our support to the amendment to the Customs Act, which provides for a post-clearance audit. Mr. Speaker, I think we need to put this in context. The Honourable Minister of

Border Services will tell you the steps, so I will not tread on his toes, but it is contained in the customs ordinance.

Given that we have just completed a supplementary appropriation, the Ministry of Border Services, through its customs arm of Border Force, collects about $178 million annually on imports into this territory. The reason why a post-audit mechanism is so important, Mr. Speaker, is not because of our people, the day-to-day average importer, but because of the larger entities that have many more accountants on payroll, who are very clever.

I am not saying that they do it intentionally, but sometimes some declarations may not be as clear as they should have been when they were made. There is a mechanism in the Customs Act that provides for an audit procedure. What we are seeking to do with this bill is to bring it to the forefront for importers that, even though they have received their goods, the goods have been released and they have paid a sum, when the Border Force arm that regulates importation and customs conducts audits within five years, they are on notice. Basically, this is another layer of ensuring that importers and users of these services know that it is best to keep their books straight and not get too clever with their numbers, because five years is a long time for the department to come and have a review.

You may think, I got away with it last year. The second year has gone by and they are not studying me. In year three, there is a knock on the door. Section 93A says hello, I am a customs officer and I have a right to examine and copy your books, records and accounts.

The most important thing is the correspondence. The correspondence is where orders generally are negotiated and the real numbers are made. While your books may be presented in one way, this amendment gives access to correspondence. It allows the department, or the arm of Border Force, to drill down and find out the true intent, the true number or the true value of what was imported compared with what was declared.

This correspondence extends to contracts, electronic records, emails and any other documents directly or indirectly related to that declaration or to the time period in which the audit is taking place. In the past, when your goods were released to you, you may have thought that was the end of the procedure. This amendment puts you on notice that the procedure ends 60 months after the release or payment of goods, and not at the time you put them on the truck that takes them away from the freight forwarder. It also provides that customs officers have the authority to knock on the door and make those inquiries in year two, year three, year four and year five.

If it is determined that the documents you have provided do not reflect the accuracy of the declarations, including the classification, value, quantity, correct tariff treatment, duties charged, taxes paid or levies, the officer then determines that you are not in compliance with what you said you imported. The fine, in my view, is a little low, but we are starting and, based on the parameters of the region, we are in good standing. If it is determined that there was an underpayment, whether of duties, charges, taxes or levies, based on the documents that the officer discovers during the post-clearance audit, then that person or business, because a body corporate is a person in legal definition, can be liable to a fine of $5,000, which is the lowest end, or three times the value of what was not paid to TCIG, whichever is greater.

If your declaration said that the tax on this phone was $10, and when the audit takes place it is determined that the tax should have been $100, three times that is $300. However, $5,000 is more than $300, so the penalty for failing to disclose and pay the tax over to TCIG would be $5,000.

This is heavy legislation, but it is prudent and reasonable legislation to protect one arm of our borders that could be exploited because of its porous nature, the customs route into the territory. Documents can be doctored, but this gives the customs arm of Border Force the opportunity not to feel rushed in its audit review. While there is a five-year period from final submission to the Government to the end of the period in which it can review, it does not have to conduct the audit within a week to meet an arbitrary deadline. If documents are presented and the review indicates that they may be fraudulent, or that there may be concerns or numbers may have been doctored, there is sufficient time to conduct the work that needs to be done and make a determination.

As the Deputy Premier advised, just because I paid the Government $10 and walked away with this, five years later the Government can still come back and obtain the difference if, on reviewing my import statements, it is discovered that I shortchanged TCIG. That is the penalty for which I am liable. In that context, Mr. Speaker, $178 million over the last three years is the average amount of duty raised by TCIG on customs imports. With this extra layer of notice and information, I truly believe that number will go up, because persons are now on notice that time is not on their side, but time is on Border Force side to get to them and conduct the audit.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I bid you a pleasant evening. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

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

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the support of the Leader of the Opposition. To touch on a couple of his concerns, in addition to what the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs touched on, in terms of red flags, in Border Force, where this legislation is operated, we have intelligence-led operations to begin with. If there is intelligence suggesting that an importer may have been underpaying or doing something

untoward, then we can select that importer for a post-clearance audit. There will also be some randomness, some spot checks, because we are not going to do it for every importer every year.

We do not have the resources, and we have to think about cost-benefit analysis. Is it better to conduct a post-clearance audit randomly of an importer that nets $10,000 in revenue or one that nets $10 million in revenue? Those are the decisions that this bill allows the team in Border Force to determine: which and where the post-clearance audit takes place. As for the appeals mechanism, it is within the substantive Customs Act itself to do what the Honourable Member is asking. I will pull up exactly which section and share that with him.

In terms of a person no longer being in business, he would still be liable, of course, because a person does not escape liability just because he is out of business. Although this is not criminal per se, it is more financial. If a person was in a business and committed a criminal action in that business, if it does not go beyond the statute of limitations, he would still be liable in that instance as well. Without touching on specifics, because it might be resolved, I would just say that we are now in a process within Border Force where, from an audit over the last 12 months, we discovered that, for a particular importer, 379 pre-entries were not uploaded when they should have been, valued at roughly $1.5 million, which we are going after right now.

That is not a post-clearance audit per se, because it is on pre-entry, but it was a case of not following through with what was supposed to be done with the privilege. They would have had pre-entry privileges, by which they could get the goods released and then upload the material on the system within a short period, perhaps under seven to 14 days, and then pay and clear their goods ordinarily. This helps those types of operations, ordinarily speaking. We want to make sure that whatever revenue is out there for the Government to collect is collected.

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, I move that the Customs Amendment Bill 2026 be referred to the Committee of the Whole. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Immigration and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that the Bill entitled Customs Amendment Bill 2026 be now referred to the Committee of the Whole. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable Members, I will now suspend this Honourable Parliament and call on the Honourable Deputy Speaker to chair the Committee of the Whole. This Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Customs Amendment Bill 2026. Honourable Clerk, Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Clause 1, short title and commencement.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 1 stand part of the Bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Innovation that Clause 1 stand part of the Bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. 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. Thank you. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Clause 2, interpretation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Minister of Home Affairs that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Clause 2? There being no contributions, the question is that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

Clause 3, section 93A inserted.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 3 stand part of the Bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Minister of Tourism 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 to Clause 3? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair. Let me state, in supporting this Bill and these amendments, that I believe I was misled. There were many aspects of what was said by the Honourable Minister that were already in place. I was thinking that these initiatives were something new to the Turks and Caicos Islands. That is how it came across, as though this is something brand new, but I realise that this was within Customs from time immemorial. They have been carrying out most of these operations for some time, and the only new things are the examination of books and the time of limitation.

I do support it, and I realise the importance of this, but I believe I was misled. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, I thought this was something brand new to the Turks and Caicos Islands. It is not; it is just giving it a little more teeth, allowing entry to the books and things they could not do before. It is a little adjustment.

All that big speech was not needed.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Premier, thank you very much. Just to clarify and add on, hopefully I do not confuse you again. In existence now, we do have post-clearance audit, but it does not go into this type of detail. One of the additional features, if you look at section 93A, is this first part: the Collector may, at any time within five years from the date of importation or exportation, conduct a post-clearance audit of an importer, exporter, customs broker, courier, warehouse operator or any person engaged in activities regulated under this Act.

I think that is part of the expansion, so anybody involved is covered; it is a wide net. It is not just the primary importer, which is the current framework. It is an improvement, and I would have mentioned it being improved, but something similar is in the current Customs Ordinance. It needed to get more teeth to be able to do a bit more, so that we close any potential leakages that might be out there.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I direct the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's attention to page 4, which is the explanatory memorandum. I will read it out because I do not want it to be said that there was any improper motive by either of the parties that spoke to this Bill this evening, the Deputy Premier and myself. This Bill seeks to amend the Customs Act to provide for post-clearance audit of goods that have been cleared and released.

This amendment Bill, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, seeks to bring the Turks and Caicos Islands in line with international best practice and the World Customs Organization guidelines for post-clearance audit and the Revised Kyoto Convention, which provides for the simplification and harmonization of customs procedures. It indicates that Turks and Caicos was not previously in line with international best practices, and this amendment seeks to do that. While there is a procedure in our current legislation, through this amendment we are now following the best practices in the World Customs Organization guidelines. Secondly, the convention is the blueprint for modern and efficient customs procedures in the 21st century.

This amendment Bill defines post-clearance audit, or audit-based controls, as measures by which Customs satisfy themselves as to the accuracy and authenticity of declarations through the examination of the relevant books, records, business systems and commercial data held by the persons concerned. As the Deputy Premier indicated, the definition of persons concerned based on Clause 3 of the Bill at 93A is wide enough to catch wherever creative accounting practices may exist in that system or loop. You could have a proper importer, exporter, customs broker, carrier or warehouse operator, but then have a dodgy final recipient who supplied those persons up the chain with incorrect information. The current framework, as the Deputy Premier has indicated, would literally only attach to the importer or the exporter.

The final person may have fraudulently sent documents up the chain that those parties would not have been aware of. They could have been penalized because this did not extend down to the final receiver of the goods. That is what this Bill is seeking to do. Grateful, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, just a comment to say that the Honourable Minister could have said that and we could have been out of here a long time ago. If he had just said that, we would have been out of here a long time ago.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any more contributions? Any further contributions to Clause 3? 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. Thank you, Honourable Members. We have concluded our consideration of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026, and I will suspend to allow the Speaker to take this Chair.

This Committee is now hereby suspended.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament now resumes its sitting. Pray be seated. Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you again, Honourable Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Committee has completed its consideration of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026 with no amendments, and I now turn these proceedings over to you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, I want to thank the Honourable Deputy Speaker for chairing the Committee of the Whole and overseeing the passage of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026. Honourable Members, we are now at the Third Reading of Bills, and we will have the Third Reading of the Customs Amendment Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

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

Hon. Gordon Burton:

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

Clerk:

This Act may be cited as the Customs Amendment Act 2026 and shall come into operation on publication in the Gazette.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Now, Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

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

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Member for Cheshire Hall and Richmond Hill that the Bill entitled Customs Amendment Bill 2026 do now pass. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Members, the Bill entitled Customs Amendment Bill 2026 has now passed. Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT OF THE PARLIAMENT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this Parliament stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 am.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 am.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for your contribution. Before we move on to other contributions, I think at this point we would like to take a short comfort break. Therefore, this Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended for five minutes.