



Minutes No. 3

of the

18th Parliament

Tuesday, 25th February 2025



MONTERRAT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

ORDER OF THE DAY

**Meeting No. 3 of the 18th Parliament
Tuesday, 25th February 2025, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room, Cultural Centre, Little Bay**

- 1. PRAYERS**
- 2. OATHS**
- 3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**
- 4. PAPERS TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE**

(a) Financial Secretary

Performance Audit of Montserrat Utilities Limited Efficiency, Effectiveness, Financial Stability & the Transition to Renewable Energy.

(b) Attorney General

S R & O No. 3 of 2025

Proclamation Appointing
Monday, 16 June 2025 as a
Public Holiday.

- 5. MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**
- 6. GOVERNMENT NOTICES**
- 7. UNOFFICIAL NOTICES**

8. QUESTIONS

9. MOTIONS

(1) Honorable Donaldson Romeo to move a Resolution:

‘Consideration of an increase in support to the income and salaries of the Vulnerable, the Working Poor, Pensioners, Public Servants, and other affected persons in the Public and Private Sector.’

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Appointment of the Public Accounts Committee

Review of Revised Draft of Standing Orders

11. ADJOURNMENT

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**MONTSERRAT
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETING**

**Minutes No. 3 of the 18th Parliament
Held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room, Montserrat Cultural Centre, Little Bay**

PRESENT:

Honourable Marjorie Smith	Speaker
Honourable Reuben Meade	Premier/Minister of Finance & Economic Management
Honourable Veronica Dorsette-Hector	Deputy Premier & Minister of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour, Transportation, Energy, & Ecclesiastic Affairs
Honourable Ingrid Buffonge	Minister for Education, Health, & Social Services
Honourable John Osborne	Minister for Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs & Sports
Honourable Crenston Buffonge	Parliamentary Secretary
Honourable Dwayne Hixon	Parliamentary Secretary
Honourable Paul Lewis	Leader of the Opposition
Honourable Donaldson Romeo	Opposition Member of Parliament
Honourable Nyota Mulcare	Opposition Member of Parliament
Honourable Sheree Jemmotte-Rodney	Attorney General
Honourable Kenya Lee	Financial Secretary (Ag)

1. PRAYERS

Father Fidelis Armin said the prayer.

2. OATHS

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

4. PAPERS TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Financial Secretary Acting.

The Financial Secretary said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to lay on the table of this Honourable House the following papers appearing under the name of the Financial Secretary.

- i. Performance audit of Montserrat's Utilities Limited Efficiency, Effectiveness, Financial Stability, and the Transition to Renewable Energy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to lay on the table of this Honourable House the following paper appearing under the name of the Attorney General.

- i. SR&O No. 3 of 2025 – Proclamation appointing Monday, 16 June 2025, as a Public Holiday.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5. MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education, Health, and Social Services.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. This went more quickly than I expected. Just give me a minute to find the statement. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak as Minister of Education, Health, and Social Services. As ministries, I feel we did very well in January as teams at the Budget Support Mission, previously known as the Financial Aid Mission, where the Government of Montserrat met with the FCDO, British government, to talk about money. What I thought would have been a frightening and painful experience was actually an enjoyable three days of discussing Montserrat, its future, and our hopes for it in a very organized and well-researched manner. I would like to thank all three teams—education, health, and social services—for excellent teamwork, excellent presentations, and excellent discussions, and for their undying commitment to improving Montserrat, each in their own way. The highlight for me during the Budget Support Mission was the Adult and Child Safeguarding discussion, which was incredibly moving. I am very happy that we take this subject very seriously. In all areas, though, I felt that all three teams did excellent work, and we are expecting the best outcome at the budget talks next month.

The purpose of this ministerial statement is to briefly recap or ask for the sake of those members of the public who would like to be kept informed, Madam Speaker. To give the people, Madam Speaker, the assurance that the priorities and the commitment of our government have not changed in regard to health, education, and social services. In education, we have asked for the following, all in line with the United Nations 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and our Sustainable Development Plan locally. We have asked, as we said we would, for a special educational needs program that has a legal and policy framework, an adequate staffing complement and training provision that mirrors that in the United Kingdom. For this to happen, we welcome an assessment or a reassessment of our school population through a UK team. The staffing complement must include speech and language therapists that we are hopefully shortly to get, and a full complement of special educational needs staff will also include a special educational needs coordinator for each school, an educational psychologist, this role is presently being advertised, special educational needs teachers, and special educational needs personal assistants.

I'd like to note that in this request or in this ask we have the support of the Montserrat community, persons who are parents of special educational needs children, well-wishers for the children, and teachers who would like further training in this area.

We have asked for funding for after school programs to ensure that our children during the vulnerable period from 2 pm to 6 pm, in which there is often no or inadequate parental support, that they are safe, learning or engaged in career development, in sporting activities, or other safe activities. So, we are asking for money for after-school clubs where our children can be protected, safe, and can learn some things.

We have also asked for an extension of the school meals program to include breakfast and for a lunchroom or cafeteria for the Montserrat Secondary School. Our children, Madam Speaker, should not be expected to sit on the ground, or on a wall, or on a stone to eat meals at school. We have asked for funding to repair the schools. It is too great a risk not to have repairs done. Two students have recently suffered broken limbs, and a teacher has been injured due to faulty buildings. We have asked for an education project manager to facilitate the research, the development, and the implementation of our plans in education. We have asked for assistance with staffing for legislative and policy review in education. We have asked for learning and development support for our staff in education through established partnerships with established UK schools, and we have asked for the support of teachers locally in the form of a teacher retention program.

For the library, lastly, in education, we have asked for funding for library development. The library plans to extend its hours to assist students, and there is also a need for additional support for their essential archiving project.

In health, we have discussed the problem of medical evacuation with a view to improving on the present situation. This is not a funding request, as it does not cost extra to get a patient out faster, but it warranted discussion on the importance of timely medical evacuation for our time-critical cases. We campaigned on appropriately managing the complications of diabetes, hypertension, which are prevalent on this island, and please note that by the age of 60, 60% of Caribbean people are diabetic and hypertensive, so this is very relevant, and over the last 40 years, we have watched the onset of complications in this population despite a commit-

ment to primary health care and prevention programs, so it is essential that we focus on these complications. We hope for a specific focus on the cardiovascular complications of diabetes and hypertension, focus on end-stage kidney disease, and focus on blindness, which incapacitates older members of our population. At the budget support mission, we asked for funding for visiting specialist clinics to include a vascular surgeon and a vascular sonographer to assess and repair circulatory issues at the level of the blood vessels, thus avoiding amputation. For the management of stroke and heart attack, this is more about following appropriate guidelines, liaising with the appropriate specialist, and timely medevac. This is about policy and protocol and less about extra money.

In ophthalmology, we have not made a specific ask, but we are presently liaising with specialists about the option of local eye surgery for our elderly population in order to avoid the cost and the inconvenience of travel for eye care. In kidney disease, we await a discussion planned for next week on dialysis with a charity. As a population very susceptible to kidney disease, we also have a genetic predisposition beyond the presence of diabetes and hypertension, so as a population where kidney disease is on the rise, we are having a discussion next week to focus on how we can bring dialysis to Montserrat in the most efficient, cost effective and safe way. We have promised an early cancer diagnosis, and we have asked with our visiting specialist program to cover the cost of visiting endoscopists for the early screening of gastrointestinal cancers and we are on our way with discussions about a cancer registry as promised. We want to end the trend of stage four cancers being the first cancer diagnosis on Montserrat. In early diagnosis, but by diagnosing patients early with a cancer, we are more likely to achieve a cure, Madam Speaker, and it also reduces the overall cost of care and allows for persons to remain in the workforce. There were many other health asks through health transformation which relate to funding and maintenance of the CT and mammogram machines and their staffing and general workforce strengthening. We are still discussing health financing, how to pay for health care, a very important topic, and hopefully by the end of this year, we will have come to some conclusions. We have asked for continued and enhanced links with the United Kingdom to support the medical staff with training and staff exchanges to strengthen our local workforce.

In Social Services, we have asked for an increase in funding to social services to support vulnerable persons. We have asked for adult and child safeguarding posts to help us protect vulnerable persons on this island.

Social services also need essential staff. Social Services is a department with a very humanitarian team. They are presently overstretched and need additional support in order to continue to function normally. Montserrat's present situation, like in the rest of the world, with an aging population, on Montserrat, our nursing homes are maximally full, and this has led to older persons in our communities not having adequate care at home. If they are at home without adequate care, then we are putting their lives at risk. Many older persons are also spending long periods in the hospital because there simply is not enough money to support them at home, and as a result, they are blocking acute beds and increasing the workload of our nurses, who are presently understaffed and really struggling. So Social Services needs more money so that more people can be hired to look after our older persons at home. Under Social Services, we have also asked for more money to pay Golden Years workers whose salary is presently close to half of that of the Margetson workers. So, we are allowing them to be impoverished if we do not improve on this. There is also talk of a merger between the two homes. For the money that the Golden Years requires, it should really be under government control.

From where I sit, the nursing home needs to expand to accommodate an increasingly dependent population, an increasingly elderly independent population. We have not asked for this yet. We expect that money from social services spent for medical evacuation for CT scanning will decrease as CT is now locally available and additionally Madam Speaker if we achieve timely medical evacuation for our select time-critical cases we will additionally reduce the cost of care as outcomes will be better, recovery will be faster and we thus allow our affected patients to return to their livelihoods post intervention as opposed to becoming dependents on the State with very heavy bills which very often fall back on the State.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to say thank you to all persons working on or supporting all three teams: Education, Health, and Social Services. Thank you for your hard work and dedication. These are Ministries in which outcomes affect us on a very deep level, and also, these Ministries, Health, Education, and Social Services, are the foundation of any country. So, we live in hope, Madam Speaker, as we await budget talks next month. Thank you.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you, too, Honourable Minister.

6. GOVERNMENT NOTICES

7. UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

8. QUESTIONS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Questions to the Honourable Premier from Honourable Paul Lewis

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have a few questions here for the Honourable Premier. Question one.

- 1. When will the government resolve the issues surrounding the frequent electricity outages being experienced by residents, given that the initial target of 30 days to resolve them was not met, and what is the cost of addressing these issues?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Minister for Communication and Works said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Government of Montserrat and MUL have stabilized electricity generation, ensuring sufficient capacity to meet demand. If the Honourable Member is being honest with himself, he would have recognised that the frequency of power outages has been significantly reduced. We had an engineer on island within the time frame that he signified to enable this to happen. Some key updates: generation is stable with key generators operational and solar PV contributing to daytime supply. The overhaul of generator number seven is scheduled for mid-2025 to enhance long-term reliability. Repairs to generator number three are expected to be completed soon, adding further redundancy. The battery energy storage system remains offline, but renewable energy expansion remains a priority. Ongoing investments under the priority utility program support critical infrastructure upgrades and system resilience improvements. Rental of an auxiliary gen-

erator has been approved to provide temporary redundancy during the overhaul of generator number seven, ensuring reliability and reducing the risk of load shedding. Additionally, we expect to have an engineer on island for at least a 12-month period to provide training support to the hard-working crew of MUL. Other investments in electricity reliability: the small capital asset fund; we are seeking to have funds approved under the SCAF for the procurement of infrared cameras and fault indicators to enhance grid monitoring and fault detection. The government remains committed to ensuring a stable and resilient power supply with ongoing investments in infrastructure and energy modernization.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yeah! While I thank the Member for that answer, supplementary. Didn't get the answer for the cost of addressing these issues, you did not give that answer.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier said:

As it relates to the cost of addressing these issues, those are being worked on, and those will be presented in the upcoming budget in March.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

- 2. It is the intention of government or is it the intention of the government to extend the duty-free concession on white goods to assist persons affected by the constant power outages and surges that contrib-***

ute to the loss of appliances within households and businesses beyond March?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the government is taking a strategic approach to matters regarding the cost of imports, which includes white goods. When dealing with matters of taxation, we must always approach from a strategic perspective rather than a reactionary one, as ad hoc or reactionary concessions impact the delivery of critical services to the residents of Montserrat. There will be an announcement of this government's planned actions in the upcoming budget.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

3. Through the Speaker, as Minister of Finance, what is the contracted amount of money for building the Little Bay Jetty and how much has been paid to the construction company to date?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the revised contract sum is \$107.3 million. The amount expended as it relates to the contract is \$64.3 million. Against this backdrop, we have been meeting with the company directors to find a way to get the project to completion, hopefully by the end of 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

4. Can the Honourable Minister of Access inform this Honourable House why ticket costs for passengers flying on Fly Montserrat and SVG are not subsidised, while WINAIR has a subsidised contract arrangement?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister for Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the Government of Montserrat does not have the authority to regulate the pricing policies of private airlines. However, we have attempted to mitigate these costs through ticket subsidies, though this is not a sustainable long-term solution. For the next 12 months, we plan to implement a price cap arrangement with current airlines to reduce ticket prices, subject to the availability of financing. Additionally, due to the absence of a ferry service during the high passenger traffic period in March, we have contracted, and may I repeat, contracted Winair to meet the increased demand, and there's a significant difference between contracted and providing a subsidy. Regarding the alleged subsidised arrangement with Winair, it appears that my Honourable brother and colleague is informing us of such an arrangement. Nevertheless, we have contracted Winair to assist with the demand, and I can confirm that most seats are already booked, demonstrating the necessity of this measure. By the time the Winair contract was signed, local airlines were already fully booked. This allowed the Government of Montserrat to alleviate the financial burden on passengers struggling to travel to and from Montserrat.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Honourable Premier, can you confirm for me if the passengers on Fly Montserrat and SVG are receiving a subsidy for the tickets for the period running up to March 2025?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if I go back to the question. Can the Honourable Minister of Access inform this Honourable House why ticket costs for passengers flying on Fly Montserrat and SVG are not subsidised? I think I've responded to that question, and therefore, I don't think the clarification that he's seeking is relevant.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, with all due respect, the clarification is relevant; it's part of my original question, and I'm asking for confirmation whether or not these tickets were subsidised or not subsidised.

Madam Speaker said:

You asked why they were not subsidised.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I asked if they were subsidised or not subsidised. I did not even ask for the reason why they were not subsidised. All I simply asked for was if the tickets for passengers travelling on SVG and FlyMontserrat were subsidised during the period leading up to the end of March.

Madam Speaker said:

Based on what I see here, it's asking for a reason. It asks why ticket costs for passengers.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yes, so I'm asking. My supplementary, I'm referring to the supplementary, is asking if they were subsidised or not, for confirmation whether they were subsidised or not.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, Honourable Minister. Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access, sorry.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I'm not seeking to duck the question, but the initial question reads: "Can the Honourable Minister of Access inform the Honourable House why ticket costs for passengers flying on Fly Montserrat and SVG are not subsidised?" My question, in my view, responded to that, and according to the rules, if he needs further elucidation, I don't think that the question that he's asking as a supplementary is an elucidation to this question that he is asking.

Madam Speaker said:

Based on the original question, it seems as if you already know that they were not subsidised, though, because you're asking why they are not subsidised. So, it seems as if you knew that they weren't subsidised. So, you're asking the question again?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did my job. I did my part. If the Premier don't wish to confirm whether they subsidise or not, I guess he'll do that in a different forum. I'll move on. Question 5.

5. *Can the Honourable Premier confirm the process used to appoint the Community Liaison Officer and the position of Advisor to the Premier? Additionally, can the Premier state the salary attached to each post and whether the positions are funded from the Consolidated Fund?*

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the first part of the question, I think, is misdirected within the Office of the Premier and its extensions. This matter does not fall under any of those ministerial responsibilities. However, the creation of the special advisor position was also recommended at a 2021 organisational review of the Office of the Premier, which deemed it fit for a special advisor role to be established within the Premier's private office in order to address the lack of direct support to the Premier within our system here. The appointment of the advisor to the Premier is seen as a key requirement to provide high-level support in relation to policy, strategic support to the Premier, and this position is one which is well established in other governments, regionally and internationally and is a politically appointed role. Upon taking office, the advisor role was established with the approval of the Office of the Deputy Governor and the position is financed through the recurrent budget.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, through you to the Premier, the question was about the salaries associated with both positions. I didn't get a salary for any of them.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, salaries of public servants are coming from the recurrent budget, and sometimes, Madam Speaker, I wonder, why do we keep looking in the plate of others to see what others get? We're not talking policy issues, we're not talking policy decisions, but we want to see what our brothers and sisters get. And therefore, if the Honourable Member wishes to know what the salary is, have a call to the Permanent Secretary, and the Permanent Secretary will give you that response.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, while the Premier is free to do his rhetoric, my questions are asked, and the answers are for the Parliament and the people of Montserrat. If the Premier wish to have the people of Montserrat call the Permanent Secretary.

Madam Speaker said:

I'm sorry, I was just about to tell him, let's not have a debate on the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

That's why you should have stopped him when he had a debate about calling.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition by now should understand the rules of the House. If he has another question, kindly move on to the other question.

Madam Speaker said:

Let us all move on, please. I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

6. Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Finance provide an update on the status of the Parliamentary Building Project, which was approved under the CIPREG addendum by the previous government? Specifically, can the Honourable Premier confirm whether the funding previously assigned to the project is still secured or used on the project?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, there has been no significant progress on the Parliamentary Building Project, and this is due to various factors, including but not limited to costs.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, the question asked for an update on whether or not the funds that were secured for the project to date if they have been secured to still use on the project. I didn't get the answer for that. In other words, if the Premier doesn't understand, I'm referring to the funds that were secured before he took government.

Madam Speaker said:

It seems as if he is looking for some information, so let's. Recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if there has been no progress on the Parliamentary Building and the factors that are impacting it are related to cost, among other things, it clearly means that the funds are still there.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, my one supplementary to that is whether or not the government is actively seeking additional funding to make the project for the Parliament Building a reality? I don't need to state the importance of the Parliament Building. We are right here in Parliament as I speak.

Madam Speaker said:

Is that a supplementary?

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

But that is asking for something different.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Is the supplementary allowed or not allowed, Madam Speaker? If it's not allowed, I'll sit.

Madam Speaker said:

Not that one.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I'll sit.

Madam Speaker said:

You want to answer it? Recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I know that we had a CPA training session last week...

Madam Speaker said:

Please answer the question, Honourable Premier.

The Premier said:

I am answering the question, Madam Speaker. He can't tell me how to...

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

No, Madam Speaker. A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

What is your Point of Order?

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, you said my supplementary was not allowed, so I sit. I'm moving on to another question. So, let the Premier sit.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay. Let us leave that one. Can you move on, please?

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

*Questions to the Honourable Minister of Infrastructure et al. from
Honourable Paul Lewis*

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. I now move on to Ministers who wish to answer questions. Madam Speaker, I do have a question for the Honourable Minister of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour and Transportation.

- 1. Can the Honourable Minister please advise why the private contractors previously employed for verge cutting on the main road are now replaced by government workers?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The Public Works Department has improved the frequency of verge cutting along the main road in response to increased regrowth by utilising its own staff. This

approach allows for better scheduling, consistency, and efficiency in maintaining Montserrat's primary artery road, ensuring that the road network remains clear and visually appealing. The private contractors previously employed for verge cutting on the main road have completed their contracts as budgeted, with some even being paid for an additional cut. With the Public Works Department budget for this activity now fully utilised, the decision to use in-house staff ensures continuity in maintaining the verges. Private contractors remain engaged in the process as they will continue to have opportunities to bid for verge cutting on B and C roads and, where necessary, may be co-opted to assist on the main road. This strategy aligns with our broader vision of positioning Montserrat as a five-star destination, ensuring that our island is presented at its best at all times while also taking financial constraints into account.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2. Madam Speaker, can the Minister explain the reason for the most recent power outages?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILT.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Between 12th and 14th February 2025, the power outages were caused by high winds, which triggered multiple temporary line faults and system protection shutdowns. Strong gusts increased tree branches and the power lines movement, leading to short circuits and dislodgement of infrastructure components. The outages were particularly concentrated in the north, where above-ground transmission and distribution infrastructure is more exposed to harsh environmental conditions. Despite these challenges, electricity generation has remained stable over the past several months. It is the intention, and it is important to note that system protection shutdowns are automatic safety measures designed to prevent further damage. I would like to

commend the dedicated efforts of the MUL linesmen and other workers who worked under extremely challenging conditions to restore power quickly once the faults were identified. Their commitment ensures that disruptions are minimised. Recognising the ongoing vulnerability of above-ground power lines, the government remains committed to improving grid resilience. This includes continuing efforts to transition more infrastructure underground, particularly in the northern region, to mitigate future outages and enhance system reliability.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Questions to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Land and Environment from Honourable Paul Lewis

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank the Minister for answering the questions. Madam Speaker, I move on to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment and Sports.

- 1. Can the Honourable Minister of Sports advise of any plans to assist cricketers to travel to Antigua to play hardball cricket, considering that for many years there has been no local hardball league played on Montserrat, and since arrangements for cricketers who travel to Antigua in the past to play in the Antigua league ceased due to the high cost of travel.***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Sports.

The Minister for Agriculture, Land and the Environment said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in the past, with the low cost of travel afforded to the use of government-subsidised travel, cricketers were assisted with their travels to play hardball cricket on the weekends. This support has dwindled, given the now relatively high cost of air travel, along with associated maintenance expenses. However, Madam Speaker, the Sports Department has aided players with financial support to attend overseas camps, and consequently, we now have a

member of the Leeward Islands Hurricane Squad. Madam Speaker, resources have also been committed to the Montserrat Cricket Association (the MCA) for preparation for the Leeward Islands tournaments, scheduled for May to July of 2025. The players have met with the MCA and me and are enthusiastic about representing Montserrat. Madam Speaker, the Department is also preparing a draft sports calendar for all sports to include both local and overseas events. The reason for this calendar is to help better forecast and budget for the overall development of our athletes, to include overseas travel for, but not limited to, the cricketers, since this was specified in the question.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, thank you for

- 2. Given the growing concerns about moral decline among our youth, can the Honourable Minister outline the government's strategy to counter negative influences and behaviours? Specifically, what policies or programs are being implemented to promote positive values, strengthen character development, and provide constructive guidance for young people in schools and the wider community?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Sports.

The Minister for Agriculture, Land and the Environment said:

Madam Speaker, I could give a Dr. Buffong-esque response to this question, but I tried to make it as short as possible. Madam Speaker, the Government of Montserrat recognises the growing concerns about the moral decline among our youth, and as part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a positive environment for the next generation, we have outlined a comprehensive set of strategies aimed at addressing these concerns. The first one is educational reform and values integration. We are working closely with the Ministry of Education to integrate values-based education into the school curricula. This includes programs designed to teach critical life skills such as empathy, responsibility, and respect for others.

We believe that promoting positive character development from an early age will help our youth navigate the challenges of a modern society. We also have the youth engagement programs. This government, Madam Speaker, is expanding youth engagement initiatives that provide safe spaces for our young people to explore their interests in sports, arts, and community service. These programmes, like the newly accredited apprenticeship programme, will integrate a supply-side component with a demand-side intervention to create an environment which is conducive to the creation of new jobs while improving the quality of existing jobs geared at youth retention. Madam Speaker, not only will our youth be well-equipped to work, whether as employees or as self-employed young persons, but the qualifications which come with this work-based training will make them well-prepared for job interviews and marketable for professional careers. Additionally, Earnhardt sports programs geared at self-discipline, critical thinking, sportsmanship, and self-esteem will form part of the many attributes for creating well-rounded young persons on Montserrat. Madam Speaker, we also have the strengthening family support systems. In recognizing the importance of the family unit, Madam Speaker, in shaping youth behaviours, this government is committed to increasing support for family counselling services, parenting workshops, and programs designed to strengthen the bond between parents and children. We also have collaboration with non-governmental organisations, NGOs. The government has partnered with NGOs and the private sector to support youth mentorship and rehabilitation through on-the-job training programs and capacity-building workshops. It goes on, Madam Speaker, mental health awareness and support, mental health is also a key factor in the wellbeing of our youth. To address the underlying causes of behavioural issues, this government is increasing access to mental health services and awareness campaigns aimed at destigmatising mental health challenges. Madam Speaker, we believe that by addressing the emotional and psychological needs of our youth, we can reduce the likelihood of them engaging in harmful behaviours. Madam Speaker, in this vein, the reintegration into society for ex-offenders, the RISE programme, is aimed at supporting former inmates in their reintegration process, reducing recidivism, that is, a tendency for convicted criminals to reoffend, and fostering safer, more resilient communities. RISE focuses on providing essential resources, skills training, and support networks to help former inmates rebuild their lives and contribute positively to society. The program aims at reintegrating ex-offenders into society through a phased approach, the pre-release phase, which focuses on preparing the individual for a return to society. This involves counselling, skills development,

and planning for housing and job placement. The transition phase begins immediately following release from prison. This involves providing support and guidance to ex-prisoners within the early days and weeks of re-entry into the community. And the post-release phase Madam Speaker, ongoing access to supportive services for ex-offenders, which includes training and development sessions and classes. Madam Speaker, we also have our public awareness campaigns. We are committed to launching enhanced public campaigns that highlight the dangers of negative influences, such as substance abuse, violence, and online exploitation. Through mass media, social media platforms, and community outreach, we aim to educate both youth and parents about the potential dangers and the importance of making responsible choices. Madam Speaker, and I'm sure the Honourable Dorsette Hector would like this one, the legislation and law enforcement side of things. This government would also enforce laws designed to protect our young people from exploitation and harm, especially in the areas related to cyberbullying, substance abuse, and exposure to inappropriate content. We are also working on strengthening partnerships with law enforcement to ensure that these laws are properly upheld. We will also promote positive role models, Madam Speaker, and I'm sure the Honourable... Right, sorry, the Honourable Opposition Leader and Opposition Member would be quite a willing part of this. But by highlighting success stories and positive role models in various sectors of society, such as sports, education, and entrepreneurship, this government aims to inspire young people to strive for excellence and make good choices.

Finally, Madam Speaker, based on this government's one Montserrat approach to our beloved island's development, we believe that by working together, we can provide our youth with the tools they need to thrive and make responsible choices, thus countering negative influences building a stronger, more resilient Montserrat society through our deliberate efforts at youth retention. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yes, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister for his comprehensive answer, and I do hope and wish him all the best in terms of a successful implementation. Madam Speaker, the next question is,

- 3. What are the government's plans for the strip of land in Little Bay spanning from Ponteons to Buss a Lime, presently occupied by several local businesses, and will those businesses be incorporated into those development plans by being allowed to stay and operate in their present location?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Lands.

The Minister for Agriculture, Land, and the Environment said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in short, there are no concrete plans that have been made at this time for that specific area. However, Madam Speaker, I think it would be the wish of any government to want the best development for its country. That could be upgrades to the businesses currently along the beach or even a yacht marina as an idea that has floated around our communities for years before my tenure. Madam Speaker, this government has promised to embark on a one-Montserrat project, which even the Opposition will have a chance to give input on. Needless to say, the ideas for Little Bay on a whole are expansive and will be driven by opportunity and access to financing, with the input of persons who wish to be stakeholders in the development of the island. Madam Speaker, at this point, I wish to notify the House that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition chaired a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UKCPA seminar on cross-party collaboration. So, I'm sure, Madam Speaker, that he will be more than willing to share his ideas for the development of this area.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yes Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his answer, and just for clarification from the original question, whatever together the Opposition and the government plan for Little Bay, I just want to ask the Minister if it is his intention that the present operators, if they so wish, would be allowed to remain and operate on the site, and I know he would be willing to provide an answer that would be appropriate.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Lands.

The Minister for Agriculture, Land and the Environment said:

Sorry, Madam Speaker, I don't know if the Honourable Opposition Leader would call this response appropriate, but I think he would understand, one, the term collective responsibility, and two, the term inherited responsibility. Madam Speaker, I came into government, and I'll talk about the inherited responsibility first. I came into government and met some issues in the area along the lines of people that are approaching squatter's rights issues, which stemmed about eight or nine years ago. So, I don't need to do the calculations, so the Honourable Member would know which government those would have originated in, so I won't go any further into that. Those are the issues that I'm seeking to fix currently, and I think I would have answered his original question, his supplementary question in my original response, about not actually having any plans for that area currently. Thank you.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. Applying wisdom, I assume that the Minister means that for those who are squatting, he would ensure that they have legal rights. I'll move on to the next, the questions to the next Minister. With your permission, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, go ahead.

Questions to the Honourable Minister of Education, Health and Social Services from Honourable Paul Lewis

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

To the Honourable Minister of Education, Health, and Social Services.

- 1. Is there any financial allowance and health and safety gear currently being provided to staff of the Environmental Health Department who are exposed to hazardous materials in their line of duty?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you for the question, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I would like to firstly thank the hardworking staff of the Environmental Health Department of the Ministry of Health. The challenges of working in these roles in this department are great and are beyond what normal government workers would face. Presently, protective health and safety gear required by environmental health staff is provided by the Ministry, and to the best of my knowledge, I don't think that there's a problem with this. However, the staff have been asking for a hazardous allowance for some time, which has not yet been provided. Hazardous allowance is an additional pay component given to employees of environmental health due to the inherent risks and the potential exposure to hazardous substances that they face while performing their duties. This includes exposure to pollutants, chemicals, or unhygienic material, and this is something for us to strongly consider. On Montserrat, the actual pay received in health roles is very low; therefore, this allowance would be a very good way to support environmental health workers in their roles.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Yeah, Madam Speaker, to the Minister, I'm not sure if I missed it, but I did ask also about the health and safety gear provided. You want to touch on that?

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Yeah, I mentioned it, that health and safety gear provided by the Ministry, and I don't think that's a problem at this point unless you know of something differently. Happy to hear.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Minister. I move on to the next question.

- 2. Given the growing learning gap, particularly in reading among our boys, can the Honourable Minister outline the Government's policy initiatives to address this issue, and what targeted interventions are being implemented to improve literacy and ensure the boys receive the necessary support to succeed?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Factors negatively affecting learning in schools on Montserrat include teacher and teaching assistant shortages in the schools, inadequate after-school programs which will allow students to catch up, failure for us to identify and support students with special educational needs over generations, failure to adequately manage and support students with behavioural problems in school, and the economic and social struggle of parents. This government's targeted policy initiatives to support students with the learning process are large and re-

quire additional staffing and funding. These initiatives include a teacher retention program which addresses remuneration and continued professional development, the hiring of teaching assistants, the commencement of a special educational needs program with the right legal and policy framework, special educational needs staffing and after-school programs to support students. These programmes offer support to all students. To hone in specifically on boys warrants the awareness of the gap. And I thank you for this question, which I believe, Madam Speaker, Honourable Lewis has posed, which is truly aimed at highlighting the problem in boys in reading and finding solutions. Ensuring that our boys are being taught with specific focus, ensuring that teaching programs are interesting and suitable enough for them to be engaged in, ensuring that reading programs are linked with real life experiences aimed at motivating boys, ensuring that school libraries contain books which would interest them, ensuring that our boys are included in after school reading programs and that they take advantage of the opportunities at the public library are all initiatives which going forward should have a positive impact on reading in this group of children and their learning in general. We also want to ensure that the summer school programs help all students to catch up, including boys and that the continued professional development of teachers, including this continued professional development during summer programs, includes assistance on how to encourage and teach reading and comprehension, with the additional special emphasis on boys. Boys clubs through community centres, schools or the library will also be extremely useful in instilling discipline, behaviour and a love of learning. Truly thank you for that question, Honourable Lewis.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, I truly thank the Minister for such a comprehensive answer. Madam Speaker, I don't even know if I want to ask a question because it's a sensitive question, but I have to ask it because people have been pressing me to ask a question, but I know it's sensitive; I discussed it with the Minister before I sent in the question.

3. In light of the growing concerns about incidents of sexual misconduct at the secondary school, can the Honourable Minister outline

the government policy initiatives to address these issues? Specifically, what measures are being implemented to ensure a safe learning environment for all students, including prevention programs, support services for affected students and disciplinary protocols for offenders? As I said, I know it's a very sensitive question, but it's a question that merits an answer.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sexual misconduct has been a long-ignored problem at the Montserrat Secondary School, and I thank the Honourable Member again for his question, which highlights this extremely troubling problem. Unfortunately, this misconduct includes both misconduct among the students themselves and also abuse by adults who have preyed on MSS students for generations. Policy initiatives being taken by the Ministry of Education to address the problem of sexual misconduct include the following. We plan to improve surveillance at the Montserrat Secondary School. As a Ministry, we have been asking for security cameras on the MSS compound to monitor activity, to deter behavioural problems and to help with determining the main perpetrators. We anxiously await funding for this. We also continue to encourage security officers in their monitoring of the compound. Unfortunately, the layout of the MSS makes this challenging, and we are strongly considering increasing the number of security officers. We have planned a multi-agency approach as we go forward to determine what the best practice is for the MSS and what level of input is needed. This involves the involvement of the police and social services, and warrants heavy discussion regarding what level of security we actually need on the compound. Do police personnel need to be on the compound at all times? Specific professionals such as the clinical psychologist and guidance counsellors are essential in the schools in managing and guiding both offenders and victims. I am sure that you are aware that the consequences of sexual abuse are serious and warrant professional intervention. Child offenders, in addition to the involvement of the police and legal action that is necessary, also require psychosocial support, as they too may have been subjects of abuse in the past and need this support to make sure they continue to have good mental health and also to protect them from reoffending. We also need to

make sure that there is surveillance and monitoring of persons who have offended to prevent reoffence. The Government of Montserrat is hiring a child safeguarding officer to help with the planning and implementation of our approach to protecting children and will help with the creation of pathways for managing and preventing persons from offending or reoffending, and they will help with the writing of safeguarding policies and protocols. The rejuvenation of the Child Safeguarding Board is a targeted initiative of the Ministry to protect children in our schools and to protect children in our communities.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I want to thank the Minister for a comprehensive answer to a difficult question. My only supplementary, so to speak. I realize it is a tough topic, a heavy topic. I mean, is there, in your opinion, if there is any assistance that you think you need that you haven't already have in your position?

Madam Speaker said:

Questions should not seek opinions, Honourable Member.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, I removed the opinion and ask the question again. Do you believe there is any further assistance that you require other than what is already provided to help with the situation?

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think as we go forward, because this is an extremely sensitive topic and the question of security and level of security is something that persons in our communities will have strong opinions on, so I think as we go forward in terms of how best to control behaviour at Montserrat Secondary School, including that sort of misconduct it's going to need a lot of discussion with community and we welcome the input of Opposition in terms of your opinions for what we should do as we go forward.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to all the Members of the government side who answered the questions, and that's the end of my questions.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Including the Premier, even though he avoided some of them.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo, sorry.

*Questions to the Honourable Premier from Honourable Donaldson
Romeo*

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

- 1. Can the Honourable Minister of Access tell this Honourable House what the monthly cost to contract Winair for the months of February and March 2025 is for each month?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I'll give the cost in US dollars and convert them to EC in total if you don't mind, since the contract is in US dollars. February, \$27,300, March, \$252,700 for a total of \$280,000 US. For ease of reference, the total sum is \$756,000 EC.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

A supplemental, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one 19-seater cannot replace a 100 or 200-seater passenger ferry....

Madam Speaker said:

Excuse me? You're seeking information from his answers?

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. I just prefaced it with that. And may I repeat then?

A 19-seater cannot replace a 100 or 200-passenger ferry, and many who booked their tickets are now cancelling because there's not enough airlift. So, my question, my supplemental to Premier is, has your contract with Winair used up all of the funds allotted for air access? Or are there some further funds that can be allotted or could have been allotted to provide additional airlift with SVG's Twin Otter?

Madam Speaker said:

Excuse me, Honourable. You asked a question about the costs, and he provided the costs. And in your preamble, you started an argument which should not be one, that it cannot be. Okay, so let's avoid that. Let us hear a supplementary based on the answer.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Premier just outlined the costs for the contract for Winair for the months of February and March. Can he tell us whether that cost has used up all of the funds available for access and whether there are any further funds available to hire a Twin Otter from Winair or otherwise?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I struggle to understand what elucidation means. And as a consequence, his supplementary is not seeking elucidation. He's seeking to ask a further substantive question. And I think, based on the rules of the House, which he ought to know by now, if he needed to ask that substantive question, then ask it.

Madam Speaker said:

I'm afraid I have to agree with the Minister, so I can't allow that supplementary.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Well, I agree too, Madam Speaker. I just hoped he would have wanted to answer it. Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question.

- 2. The previous government began the process of procuring a ferry for the 2025 St. Patrick's period. Can you tell this Honourable House, Honourable Minister, how much was allotted to cover the costs of procuring that ferry and why the plans or effort to procure a ferry for the 2025 St. Patrick's period were abandoned?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I have addressed this matter before in this Honourable House. In this current period of the Legislature, be it just two months, but I will, however, respond again. Upon assuming office, I did not receive any updates from the former Premier regarding any budget allocation for the ferry referenced by the Honourable Romeo, nor any details on the plans or efforts to procure said ferry. There was mention of an invitation to tender, but the report indicated that none of the bidders met the required standards due to a lack of certification.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary please.

The Honourable Premier just admitted that there was an invitation to tender. So, my question is, according to procurement rules, in order to set out an invitation to tender, you have to have monies allotted to provide for such a positive result if you get one to that invitation to tender. Therefore, are you saying that there was an invitation to tender and there were no monies allotted to provide for the ferry should the tenders have been acceptable?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if you will permit me to answer the question thoroughly, would you? The Honourable former Premier had indicated that he had permission to access a ferry for the tune of \$17 million, said that on Radio Montserrat, but he came back subsequently to say he was just joking. There were no such funds in the budget, nor any funds available. As it relates to the ITT, I have not seen any indication that funds were made available within the budget or, to the knowledge of the Financial Secretary, that there were funds approved for any ferry.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Honourable Premier, for that answer. My next question to the Honourable Minister of Access.

- 3. Considering that it could take three to six months to procure a ferry, has the Government of Montserrat made any moves or begun the***

process of procuring a ferry for the December 2025 Christmas and 2026 St. Patrick's season?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, once again, the Honourable Member should know from his experience, I hope, that nothing can be confirmed until the budget has been passed. Yes, we are continuing to have discussions and negotiations on a range of possibilities, but we cannot give any indication of what may be committed because funds have not yet been approved.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Question to the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure et al. from Honourable Donaldson Romeo

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My next question is for the Honourable Minister of BUILT, and that is,

- 1. Everywhere I go, constituents ask me what is happening with the Little Bay Port project. Could the Honourable Minister give us a time frame in which the Little Bay Port project will get going and be completed?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Minister of BUILT.

The Minister for Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, et al. said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Romeo. The port has not stopped. The Government of Montserrat recognises the public's keen interest in the progress of the Little Bay Port development project, and rightfully so. Construction began on 9 June 2022 with an original completion date of 4 January 2024, later revised to 15 January 2025,

which has now passed. This project remains a high priority, and we are fully committed to seeing it through to successful completion. Therefore, we continue to work closely with our partners, including the UK Government, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the project contractor, to address the challenges that have arisen. These include delays in resolving claims, equipment breakdowns, adverse weather conditions which we have no control over, shortages of material, staff and financials. Due to the sensitive nature of ongoing discussions, specific details cannot be provided at this time. Additionally, we continue discussions at the highest levels with the contractors, directors, and project management teams to resolve these challenges and regain momentum. To strengthen oversight and ensure better project governance, the government has established a Strategic Project Portfolio Board chaired by the Financial Secretary. The SPBP, which is a Strategic Project Portfolio Board, brings together key government officials, including the ministers, project stakeholders and representatives from the FCDO to oversee major projects like the port development. We want to assure the public and to the Honourable Members of this House that we are working diligently to advance the port project in a responsible and sustainable manner. Updates will be provided as soon as it is appropriate while respecting the confidentiality required for key resolution matters. We appreciate the public's patience and understanding as we continue working to deliver this critical infrastructure project for Montserrat.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplemental, if you may.

Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House how the Opposition can support her Ministry to see that the port project is put right and get going towards being completed?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister.

The Minister for Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure et al. said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as we have said earlier, we participated in our Parliamentary Seminar. We spoke of cross-party collaboration. I thank the Honourable Member for the offer, but I must, at this point, acknowledge that we have a very competent team which will be able to pursue the port project and successfully so. I thank him, and should we need any assistance, I will call on him, but not at this time.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for Education, Health and Social Services from the Honourable Donaldson Romeo

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question is for the Honourable Minister of Education and Health.

- 1. In recent years, hard fights between students have taken place in open view, including one at a public sports day event, sometimes circulated by video online. This problem seems to be out of control. Can the Honourable Minister of Education tell this Honourable House how she plans to address this sad and recurring situation at the Montserrat Secondary School?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question, Honourable Romeo. Inappropriate behaviour of all forms appears to be rampant at the Montserrat Secondary School. Comparing our situation with other territories it makes it clear that at the present point, something must be done. Other Caribbean education ministers describe gang violence and weapons in and around their schools. As we directly address this problem, the wider problems affecting behaviour also need to be addressed. As said earlier, filling teacher and teaching assistant gaps, identifying and supporting students with extra academic needs, investing in after-

school programmes to guide and support our children, and social support to parents.

Behavioural problems will have to be addressed through a wide multidisciplinary approach involving education and health officials, and the police. The problem does appear to be out of control. Some teachers believe that there needs to be a military approach to discipline at the Montserrat Secondary School, as they have witnessed behavioural problems spiral to their present level. Some have suggested a role for the Defence Force or the police in the MSS, or the need for a principal at the MSS who will take a more military approach. This will all warrant further discussion, including community discussions, as said earlier, to ensure that the approach taken is acceptable to most persons on the island.

Softer and more general approaches which are already in place include the following. There are three safety officers employed at the school, and the school benefits from the presence of community beat officers of the Royal Montserrat Police Force who support monitoring of the compound at key periods during the school day and perhaps the presence of both security officers and police can be increased. The MSS has behaviour management guidelines, so the school attempts to strictly enforce rules and tries to reward students for good behaviour. However, I know of several cases of bad behaviour on the part of students reported by teachers at the school, and they have not felt that action has been taken to correct the behaviour of the students. It's really essential that all reports about behaviour are dealt with appropriately. Indiscipline and bad behaviour in general obviously can make the life of a teacher unbearable and obviously interfere with the learning process, Madam Speaker, of all persons in the classroom.

Additional school counsellors have been employed to assist with behaviour at the school, and it is hoped that individual and small group counselling sessions will be found useful. The school is attempting to instil appropriate social skills and etiquette through personal and moral social education classes. Personal, moral and social education classes. Students' rights and responsibilities are also a focus in these classes. The Montserrat Secondary School has tried to keep parents abreast of behavioural challenges experienced at the school and the consequences for their children should they breach the rules. Unfortunately, many parents are able to enforce good behaviour in their homes but describe that once with their peers, their own children tend to act differently. The MSS at-

tempts to remind students of the rules in their subject classes and has also given them a voice to express their concerns as well as to plan activities that will improve their social skills in general.

Continued professional development sessions have been conducted for teachers focusing on the management of student behaviour and on challenging behaviours which may be displayed in some students. The most recent intervention was done by the child and adolescent clinical psychologist, who focused on how to manage students who have ADHD, for example.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplemental if you will allow.

Madam Speaker said:

Let's hear it.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you. Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House whether she is willing to receive and consider suggestions provided by the Opposition as part of our consultation? Suggestions that may help in curbing the number and type of fights being experienced at the Montserrat Secondary School.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Absolutely Honourable Romeo, we definitely will embrace the opinions of the Opposition. I think we need an island-wide approach to how we target this, and I do honour the Honourable Members' one Montserrat concept. There are not going to be elections

for another four years, and until then, we are Team Montserrat, so yes, we welcome your suggestions on how to move forward with this.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question for the same Minister is.

- 2. Over the past three months, several people were medevacked overseas for urgent care. Can the Minister of Education? No, I'll ask a question on education. I'll follow the question on education is that what you prefer? Yes, I'll ask on education. Can the Honourable Minister of Education tell this Honourable House specifically how many teachers are missing from the needed full complement and what is being done to fix this serious problem?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My response to this question was deemed a little bit too frank and straightforward. Thus, I have a response from the Ministry, and the response goes as such. Subject teachers are required for IT, for English and for French. The posts have been advertised. There are numerous challenges which the Ministry faces in hiring teachers. Many will not come to Montserrat because of the low salaries and high cost of living. In order to keep teaching services going, the Ministry has focused on hiring temporary teachers until the issues of salary and other aspects of working conditions can be addressed with new funding. The Ministry is also actively exploring the option of hiring teachers to teach electronically, but we face the challenge of additional costs in doing so. Once adequate funding and other logistics are provided to utilise this option, we fully intend to press on with this area in order to prevent the obvious learning loss which is presently occurring. So, the answer is three.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the interest of Team Montserrat, I shared with the Honourable Minister an answer given by the Deputy Governor and the Government of Montserrat in 2021 that I think is still relevant. Could you please share that answer with us and the public and tell me whether...

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Honourable Romeo, I cannot share your answer to your question in the House.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

No, no, not my answer. The answer given by...

Madam Speaker said:

No, no, no, Honourable Member. The supplementary must be based on the answer that she gave.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

I'll ask the question in a different way. In 2021, the Deputy Governor stated that the situation of the...

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, Honourable Premier.

The Premier said:

Is that a supplementary, or is it a substantive question which has been submitted previously?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

If he would allow the question, he would know whether it's a supplemental or not.

Madam Speaker said:

Well, let it be based on the response that the Honourable Minister of Education provided.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

It is based on the question and the response, Madam Speaker.

In 2021/2022, the Deputy Governor and the Governor of Montserrat...

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, again... May I?

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, go ahead.

The Premier said:

A supplementary based on the rules of this House seeks elucidation. The Honourable Member is seeking to bring new matters into the question, and if, in fact, he had a specific question on that issue, he should then have raised it as a specific question, but clearly not a supplementary.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Romeo, I must draw your attention to Order No. 26 on supplementary questions. And last month I read it out and I'm going to read it again. The reply to any question shall be conclusive, and no speech or debate on the reply should be allowed. But any Member may, with the permission of the Speaker, put a supplementary question for the purpose of further elucidating any matter or fact not made clear to him by the reply. But a supplementary question must not be used to introduce matter

not included in the original question. And based on where you were going with your question, I will not allow that supplementary.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question to the Honourable Minister of Education and Health.

3. Can the Minister of Health tell this Honourable House of the progress being made to have a dialysis machine in place as promised?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Health will be working with the non-governmental organisation Helping Hands of Glendon on moving forward towards the commencement of a dialysis program for Montserrat. In 2024, Helping Hands of Glendon facilitated a visit from...

Madam Speaker said:

Excuse me, please, Honourable Minister. Honourable Romeo, if you'll pay attention to the answers, maybe you wouldn't have to ask the questions that you're asking. So please pay attention.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

In 2024, Madam Speaker, the Helping Hands of Glendon facilitated a visit from Bridge of Life. Bridge of Life is the non-profit arm of one of the largest dialysis providers in the world. This NGO has performed dialysis in countries all over the world, including very impoverished countries. They have done an analysis on Montserrat's current situation, and they've prepared a budget for what it would cost us with their help, which is a fraction of what it would cost in real terms. Dialysis has been a 12-year ask for the people of Montserrat. Health workers will recall our dis-

appointment 10 years ago when the UK Montserrat charity offered to send four dialysis machines to Montserrat free of cost, and the Government of Montserrat at the time said no thank you. In end-stage kidney disease, the kidneys are unable to filter the blood and remove waste, and this results in the accumulation of waste in the bloodstream with a decline in general health until death occurs unless renal replacement therapy or dialysis or a renal transplant can be provided. The rate of decline in renal function varies from patient to patient. The cost of receiving dialysis in the region for one year at full cost is over three times as much as what it would cost to provide dialysis locally for patients. This is not even including the input of the charity. Not to mention the cost and inconvenience of travel of those persons with kidney failure or the inconvenience of relocation. Presently, on Montserrat, persons with end-stage kidney disease must either migrate to the UK or they must die on Montserrat. Diabetes and hypertension are the most common causes of end-stage kidney disease. Looking at the over-60 age group, please note that 60% of Caribbean persons in the over-60 age group are diabetic and hypertensive. The prevalence of chronic kidney disease in our region is 12 to 13%, which is higher than the global median of 9.5% and Caribbean people are also considered at increased risk of kidney disease through the APOL 1 gene from our West African ancestry. This is very significant as 86% of our local population is primarily of West African descent.

Primary health care on Montserrat has been exemplary in providing free diabetic and hypertensive clinics. The government has provided cheap and free relevant testing needed for the management of these conditions over many years. Medications for diabetes and hypertension, and high cholesterol are also free for Montserratians and cheap for non-nationals. Despite prevention and treatment programs that have been in place for years, we are still very high risk as a people for end-stage kidney disease and the provision of renal support now, 40 years since the recognition of this phenomenon, is essential.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question for the Minister: the next question is

- 4. Can the Honourable Minister of Health tell this Honourable House what will be done to support nurses on Montserrat, especially when we are losing our competent and committed but frustrated nurses year after year?**

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. To address this issue, the Ministry of Health is committed to the following. The Ministry is presently recruiting to fill vacant nursing positions. In 2023, under the previous administration, that's under MCAP with the Honourable Crenston Buffonge. In 2023, the nurses received a 100% increase in their payment for nursing sessions. These sessions are essential, and there are extra shifts that are optional for individual nurses, but they are essential for the completion of the duty roster. So, because they don't have enough nurses, the duty roster would be empty. If they didn't put on extra shifts, the extra shifts are optional, but nurses who do them are paid extra for them. The payment obviously is welcome, but it does not help with the exhaustion and the overwork. Presently, exhausted and overworked nurses cover these sessions. The nurses have the commitment of the present administration to cover the cost of nursing sessions. Although from a financial point of view, the Ministry sees these sessions as expensive, we would like to note that our nurses on Montserrat are worth every penny. We hope to eventually have an adequate number of nurses on the island, but unfortunately, just as with the teaching profession, low salaries and high cost of living make Montserrat a difficult place for persons to say yes to when considering employment here as a nurse. Suggestions have been made to add a professional allowance to the salaries of nurses and teachers, as they are indeed professionals and they are definitely essential ones. We do not have an answer to this yet.

The Ministry also hopes to create new nursing positions, that is, creating opportunities for specialist nursing. At present, there are three nurses who are out pursuing further education. One who is studying nurse anaesthesiology to become a nurse anaesthetist, one studying geriatric nursing and one who has received a Chevening Scholarship to study counselling in mental health. Our partnership with UK universities will

offer additional opportunities for nurses this year. As a Minister with an undying passion for improvements in emergency medicine, I hope to one day soon realise the dream of having emergency nurses in our emergency department at our new hospital. That's nurses who have had specific training and experience in emergency medicine, and this will help with the management of our time-critical cases. With this, we also hope to improve on how we manage our stroke and cardiac patients. If we could one day receive training to have a stroke nurse and a cardiology nurse, who will improve the quality of care in these areas.

On the National Health Service, Madam Speaker, patients with ischemic stroke are often mostly initially managed by stroke nurses with a consultant who is often available only remotely. This includes the stroke nurse administering medications for thrombolysis with the stroke consultant being in the room. There is also presently a role for a critical care nurse coordinator. I'm uncertain as to whether or not this role is being presently advertised. At any rate, the pay grade is the problem. This may not be suitable for a nurse who is qualified and experienced at that level, but it should be. In summary, Madam Speaker, to answer the question, we intend to continue supporting nurses in terms of nursing sessions. We intend to push for things like professional allowances or tax breaks for nurses, and we intend to support them with continued professional development so that they can grow and continue their contribution to our health service.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question to the Honourable Minister of Health is,

- 5. Can the Honourable Minister of Health tell this Honourable House how many patients on the island have had strokes and heart attacks over the past year and whether there are acceptable protocols in place to deal with this experience?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It looks like Honourable Romeo was following United Alliance's campaign trail more closely than we imagined, but we thank you for that. The report from the Ministry is that over the past year that there have been 12 patients who have had strokes and six patients with heart attacks. Please note that in terms of cause of death, a recent study puts diabetes and cardiovascular disease as the cause of death in 59% of cases at Glendon Hospital. The hospital is presently working on its protocols for the management of persons with stroke that are current and similar to that used by the international medical community in order to achieve best outcome for stroke patients. We are thankful that Glendon Hospital finally has a CT scanner, as this has been a 15-year ask. Thankfully, this has, over the past three months, allowed for the local diagnosis of stroke, allowing for adherence to international guidelines, which specify immediate CT on presenting with stroke symptoms. Over the past two weeks, the Ministry has also received clock-busting medication, alteplase, required for thrombolysis and stroke. I would like to thank the doctors at Glendon who have asked for this for quite a long period and who have really struggled to work without it. I honour the commitment of our doctors to working on Montserrat despite all, and just to let them know that the Ministry of Health intends to further improve their ability to manage patients. Doctors need current diagnostic equipment, Madam Speaker, and need current medication in order to appropriately manage patients, and I believe we are slowly but surely getting there. It is essential additionally that the health team have the advice of stroke consultants in a tertiary facility that is nearby, that is the closest acceptable tertiary facility, and the reason for this is that certain categories of stroke will still warrant medical evacuation for that facility. If the facility is nearby, it allows for the transfer of patients within an hour or two. Delays beyond a few hours will result in permanent disability or death, Madam Speaker, so this aspect of care, with liaising with a nearby hospital that we can get to in quick time, which can help with the management of these time-critical cases, is essential. Our protocol for the management of heart attacks is currently under review. It is essential that Glendon stays current following international standards of care, as this is the only way to continue to improve the quality of care that we provide. Most of the problems we have experienced in the past involved not having current medication; this has been solved, and major delays in medi-

cal evacuation making it impossible to give patients the proper standard of care that they require.

Now that current clot-busting medication is available on island, our doctors will be happier and will be more confident, as this will increase the chances of our patients surviving heart attacks. As with stroke, many of our heart attack patients will still warrant medical evacuation for coronary artery reperfusion, mechanical reperfusion, and this must be done in a timely manner. Delays in medical evacuation, again in heart attacks, where reperfusion with alteplase does not occur, result in cardiac failure as the heart muscle dies off and ultimately death of the patient. The purpose of medical evacuation in ischemic stroke, sorry I just said this, and in heart attack is for the possibility of mechanical intervention to assist with reperfusion and for both cases must be done in a timely manner.

Haemorrhagic stroke, Madam Speaker, where the person is bleeding in the brain, is another example of patients that will warrant quick medical evacuation, as sometimes underlying a haemorrhagic stroke is an aneurysmal bleed that can be repaired if we get the patient across in a timely manner.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question to the Honourable Minister of Education (sic) is that

6. The United Alliance promised a reduction in amputation rates in patients with circulatory problems on Montserrat. Can the Honourable Minister of Health tell this Honourable House what steps have been or will be taken to improve the situation?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Health has engaged a vascular surgeon and a vascular sonographer, and we are awaiting funds in the new financial year to start an intense program in which all of our patients who are at risk will be assessed. Our population with large numbers of patients with diabetes and hypertension are at major risk of circulatory problems involving the lower limbs, damage to circulatory problems involving the lower limbs, damage to the blood vessels taking blood to the legs and feet over time results in reduced blood flow or reduced circulation to the legs. When this becomes critical, the tissues beyond this area die off, and this puts the patient at risk of death, thus warranting an emergency type amputation to prevent death.

Our vascular clinics, destined to begin once the budget has been passed, will tackle the problem at the level of the blood vessels before it reaches a critical stage, so timely intervention at the level of the blood vessels can restore circulation or blood flow to the lower limbs and thus negate the need for an amputation.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question to the Honourable Minister.

7. Over the past three months, several people were medivacked overseas for urgent care. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House what main challenges she has faced with medivacs since she has been elected?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Difficult and saddening question, challenging response. The barriers to achieving timely medical evacuation have been as follows. The primary problems have been failure to have patients accepted by an appropriate tertiary facility nearby, combined with

marked limitations in arranging emergency travel off-island. Montserrat's present situation regarding medical evacuation is uniquely flawed by the present air travel rules. Off-island travel between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. is not allowed even in an emergency as per rules set by the Air Safety Support International, that's ASSI.

Most staffed and equipped medical evacuation aircraft, due to the specifications of the aircraft, are not allowed to travel to the island at any hour because of regulations set by ASSI. As a result of these rules, some of our time-critical emergencies can become trapped on the island, depending on what time of day that they present. Going forward, we expect some flexibility with these rules as they pertain to medical evacuation in our time-critical cases after hours. Unfortunately, though, Madam Speaker, recent failed medical evacuations have occurred during normal daytime hours, as the choice of the accepting facility has been too far away to allow for transfer by our local airline within a few hours. The only solution for Montserrat's time-critical emergencies is Guadeloupe, 20 minutes away, with first-class facilities for the management of strokes, heart attacks, and major trauma are with three main time-critical emergencies. The Ministry is presently working on a solution with Guadeloupe in the form of an MoU. Air ambulance options are also being discussed. It is essential that we press on to get a solution, and no one can know when the next stroke, heart attack or major trauma will be, and it is essential that we be prepared in order to reduce the risk of death and disability due to failure to act fast in these time-critical cases. I am confident that we have the support of the entire Ministry and the government at large as we push forward with this, as we move closer to the St. Patrick's festival, now only two weeks away. I'm obviously extremely nervous about our population doubling or tripling during that period and I pray that when the time comes that our plans for achieving successful medical evacuation by then are sorted and I pray that we have a safe and uneventful St. Patrick's and that if emergencies do occur that the health team is able to manage and that when medical evacuation is required for our visiting persons that we get our patients out to the right place within the right time.

This brings up the question of the cost of care, Madam Speaker. As we move forward, we hope to encourage all persons who live locally who are eligible for health insurance to become insured. As it relates to the St. Patrick's festival, I would like to take the opportunity to ask our visi-

tors to obtain travel insurance for their visit. Brownie Motto: Be prepared.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

And Madam Speaker, my last question to the Honourable Minister.

8. Can the Honourable Minister of Health tell this Honourable House of the progress that has been made to execute medivacs at night?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. There has been little progress to date on night-time medical evacuations, but discussions are still happening in regard to this. This will take work, which must span different Ministries, and I know Honourable Veronica Dorsette Hector in her Ministry is working on this as well. The people of Montserrat have our commitment as a government to do all that we can to ensure that night-time medical evacuation is facilitated.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplemental please.

Madam Speaker, considering that it's of critical importance that urgent cases are dealt with in a short time, as explained by the Minister and because there are no medivacs at night, which means over 180 days per se per year when you add it up, one cannot be evacuated. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House how serious it is not to be able to medivac patients at night and what the consequences are? Can you really explain this to us?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Minister for Education, Health and Social Services said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I've sort of explained, but if we are unable to medivac patients between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., that means that half the time that patients with life-threatening conditions are trapped on this island. Very often in time-critical cases, you really only have a window of a few hours, and this restriction in terms of timing will result in death and disability if we're not able to get stroke patients to a facility on time. Unfortunately, failures in medivac over the past months have suggested that the problems are deeper than this 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. issue, so we at the same time are obviously tackling those issues. It is essential that we correct the problem of night time medical evacuation if not all of us are at risk, our visitors who come here are at risk, our persons who come to live here are at risk and the reality is that what we do with our time-critical cases, persons who are overseas are watching and it makes them afraid and they want to know that if they return to Montserrat, if they have a medical emergency that we will be able to manage them efficiently locally and we'll be able to get them out on time. So obviously, this one topic has implications for repatriation, for maintaining our present population who want to feel safe, for improving investor confidence in Montserrat, why spend millions here if your workers or yourself on a visit will be trapped on this island? So, the implications of it span well beyond health, well beyond individuals, and it is essential that we come to a solution in order to allow Montserrat to progress.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and on that note, I have no further questions.

7. MOTIONS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to withdraw the motion for a Resolution that considers an increase in support to the income and salaries of the vulnerable, the working poor, pensioners, public servants and other affected persons in the public and private sector and if I may explain Madam Speaker, I realize that most members have not had the information to support this debate in good time, no fault, things were really hectic over the past week and it will be important for us to address this debate from a very informed position, although it is urgent I would like to see this House find a way to unite over this matter and therefore it is incumbent upon me to withdraw this supplemental and give this Resolution and give the Members sufficient time to thoroughly read and understand the supporting evidence provided. I read it repeatedly recently, and it is extremely serious, just as serious as what Honourable Buffonge just explained about medivacs, and I would therefore ask that this Honourable House support me in withdrawing the Resolution. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

So Honourable Members, the Member has asked to withdraw the resolution, so I'll now put the question. It has been, do we have a seconder?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Madam Speaker, I rise just to second the motion to withdraw the Resolution at hand.

Madam Speaker said:

So, Members, it has been moved and seconded that the Resolution as proposed by the Honourable Member be withdrawn.

The question was put and carried

Madam Speaker said:

The Resolution has been accordingly withdrawn.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier said:

Madam Chair, there is one standing committee of this Honourable House that we have not yet determined, and that's the Public Accounts Committee. I don't know whether or not the Opposition is ready to discuss it now. Would you be willing to do it now? So, we can ask for us to go into committee to have a discussion on the Public Accounts Committee.

Madam Speaker said:

Seconder. I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILT.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

I stand to support the motion that we go into discussions for the appointment of the Public Accounts Committee, and to do so, to allow the House to go into committee stage, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

So, Members, it has been moved and seconded that the House go into committee to appoint the Public Accounts Committee.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The House will now go into committee.

COMMITTEE STAGE

NO AUDIO FOR FIVE MINUTES

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I don't know if there is a limit to the Committee, but at least from the Opposition side I'll like to recommend Honourable Romeo, I want to suggest if the House would agree that we get, you know we had some good intervention from several of the presenters, if we could choose one to be part of the committee if it is just a select committee, they were giving good inputs. So, I don't know. Turks and Caicos come to mind. Do you agree?

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

Yes, yes.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

As I said, I don't know. It is just to get different ideas.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

I agree, and we can look at Jersey's inside the committee, yes.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

How many members are allowed?

Madam Chair said:

Honourable AG, could you assist me here with the composition of the select committee, please? So how many people would we want to have on the committee?

The Attorney General said:

Yes, Madam Chair in relation to the select committee, it doesn't seem to be a limit on the number that could be within the select committee. What the House would have to determine, though, we would have to elect, well, there should be a chairperson elected in relation to the select committee and well, the members. Since I have the mic, Madam Chair, I would like to suggest that someone from the AG's Chambers sit on the committee since we would have assisted in the drafting of the current draft.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

Sorry, I'm asking if you're recommending somebody, just choose.

The Attorney General said:

I would choose.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker

Madam Chair said:

Just a second. Yes, Honourable Romeo.

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

I would also like to recommend Honourable Dorsette, who did a good job in the previous committee and would be most familiar to Chair.

Madam Chair said:

She was recommended already, no, no—to chair, he said to chair.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

I would not have any unparliamentary language on this committee since I'm the Chair.

Madam Chair said:

I agree with you, Honourable.

The Premier said:

Chair, the recommendation which was put forward by the Honourable Lewis in relation to the young lady from Turks and Caicos, I would support, but...

Madam Chair said:

He named somebody specifically, or should we reach out to them?

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I was referring to Honourable Akierra Missick, but I guess that would be your job to contact the person.

The Premier said:

I am somewhat biased with her. I am very biased as it relates to her because she is almost like a daughter to me. No, I'm saying I give my unconditional support, but I need to disclose that we have a very close relationship.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I don't have a problem with that.

Madam Chair said:

So, based on what I have here, we have four. Do we want to have an even number or an odd number?

Mr. Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Chair, the last time we had 2 Members from the Opposition, and I also want to recommend that Madam Mulcare become part of it. It would help her a lot as a new candidate, so I want to make that request.

Madam Chair said:

Are we happy with that? So, suppose she refuses because this is done in her absence?

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I don't think she will refuse. We did have a discussion on it, but we didn't know what form it would take. But when we were thinking about it, she had a particular interest.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so if we could just recap.

Mr. Paul Lewis said:

I did recommend him. I don't know if you're throwing him off, but I did recommend him.

Madam Chair said:

So, we have two from the Opposition

The Premier said:

The question was whether or not there were men involved, so I just said Don is still a man, I hope.

Madam Chair said:

So just to recap, the suggestions for the Public Account Committee are Honourable Lewis as Chair, Honourable Mulcare and Honourable Hixon as the other two Members. So that's the composition of the public accounts committee, and for the select committee, Honourable Dorsette Hector as Chair, Honourable Romeo, we've got a recommendation for Honourable Akeirra Missick from TCI, somebody from Attorney General's Chambers, the Speaker and Honourable Mulcare comprising the Standing Orders. We'll now return to the House to report.

RESUMPTION OF ASSEMBLY

Madam Speaker said:

Following what would have really been a noncontroversial process, two committees were appointed. One being the Public Accounts Committee with the Honourable Paul Lewis as Chair, the Honourable Nyota Mulcare, another Member and the Honourable Dwayne Hixon as the third Member of the Public Accounts Committee.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Honourable Paul Lewis, the Honourable Nyota Mulcare and the Honourable Dwayne Hixon will serve on the Public Accounts Committee and the other committee which is a select committee to review the Standing Orders, Honourable Dorsette Hector as Chair, Honourable Donaldson Romeo as another member, Honourable Nyota Mulcare, someone from

the AG's Chambers who the Honourable Attorney General will select, Honourable Akierra Missick from the Turks and Caicos Island and the Speaker would form the Standing Orders select committee.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The composition of the select committee to review the Standing Orders is as outlined just now.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I beg to move a motion for the adjournment of this Honourable House sine die.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILT.

The Minister for Infrastructure et al. said:

Madam Speaker, I stand to second the motion of the adjournment of this Honourable House sine die.

Madam Speaker said:

Members it has been moved and seconded that this Honourable House stands adjourned sine die.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

This Honourable House now stands adjourned sine die.

Assembly adjourned at approximately 11.18 a.m.

Sgd: Judith Baker
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Dated this 8th day of April 2025

Sgd: Marjorie Smith
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

