

MONTSERRAT
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETING

Minutes No. 9 of the 18th Parliament
Held on Monday, 28th July 2025 at 10:00 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 (BUILTE)
Honourable Ingrid Buffonge	Minister for Education, Health, & Social Services (MEHSS)
Honourable John Osborne	Minister for Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs & Sports (MALHEYAS)
Honourable Crenston Buffonge	Parliamentary Secretary
Honourable Dwayne Hixon	Parliamentary Secretary
Honourable Paul Lewis	Leader of the Opposition
Honourable Donaldson Romeo	Member of the Opposition
Honourable Nyota Mulcare	Member of the Opposition
Honourable Jamiel Greenaway	Attorney General (Ag.)
Honourable Kenya Lee	Financial Secretary

1. PRAYERS

Reverend Everalld Galbraith led the prayer.

2. OATHS

Miss Jamiel Greenaway takes oath as Acting Attorney General.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Madam Speaker said:

Before us, we have Minutes No. 5 of 2025 dated Thursday, 10th April 2025. And assuming that there are no corrections to the Minutes, can we have someone move a motion? I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance, said:

I so move, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Do we have a seconder? Recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I stand to support the motion for the confirmation of Minutes No. 5 of the 18th Parliament dated Thursday, 10th of April 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you. So, it has been moved and seconded that Minutes No. 5 dated Thursday, 10th April 2025 should be confirmed.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

Minutes No. 5, dated Thursday, 10th April 2025, have been confirmed.

4. PAPERS TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Honourable 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. Montserrat Arts Council Financial Statements for the year ended December 31st 2017;
- ii. Basic Needs Trust Fund accounts for the financial period ended April 2020, March 2021;
- iii. Montserrat Social Security Fund financial statements for the year ended March 31st 2022;
- iv. SR&O No. 17 of 2025 – Income and Corporation Tax Robert Bodage (Exemption) Order;
- v. SR&O No. 18 of 2025 – Income and Corporation Tax Employees of Stantec Consulting International Limited (Exemption) Order;
- vi. SR&O No. 19 of 2025 – Income and Corporation Tax Franco Yerosa (Exemption) Order;
- vii. SR&O No. 20 of 2025 – Customs and Consumption Tax Delta Petroleum Limited (Exemption) Order;
- viii. SR&O No. 21 of 2025 – Customs Duties (Gregory Jean-Baptiste) (Exemption) Order;
- ix. SR&O No. 22 of 2025 – Customs Duties (Peter Ryan and Lucy Ryan) (Exemption) Order;
- x. SR&O No. 23 of 2025 – Custom Duties (Vernon Farrell) (Exemption) Order;

- xi. SR&O No. 24 of 2025 – Income and Corporation Tax (Glenville Daley) (Exemption) Order.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5. MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier. Seems we have a change. I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Premier. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning before this Honourable House with an update of the work of the Ministry of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour, Transportation, Ecclesiastical Affairs (BUILTE) for the first quarter 2025/2026 financial year. Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues its mission of helping to build ““one-Montserrat””: green, connected, and thriving, a five-star premium destination where people want to live, work, study, and find enjoyment or have fun. It requires a ““one-Montserrat”” mindset and response, a whole of Montserrat approach where all of us, irrespective of age, gender, race, creed, nationality, or ability, are all required to unite and make a positive contribution.

Our mandate at the Ministry of BUILTE is extensive and vital, from buildings, water and energy, sewage, roads and ports, labour, transport, and our public infrastructure, not forgetting ecclesiastical affairs. BUILTE carries the weight of some of the most visible and high-impact responsibilities of government. I will report using the same five pillars I outlined in the budget debate earlier this year. One, strengthening oversight; two, improving roads and public buildings; three, transitioning to renewable energy and strengthening utilities; four, securing Montserrat's maritime and aviation future, delivering on labour, transport, and ecclesiastical responsibilities, as well as other responsibilities that the Honourable Premier has so allowed me to undertake.

Strengthening Oversight and Project Management Capacity.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues to lead and support a large portfolio of projects, many with complex funding arrangements and ambitious timelines. We seek to prioritize delivery, discipline, strengthening our internal project management capacity, and enhancing coordination with key agencies. A notable example is our role in the priority utilities project. This quarter, we completed the rehabilitation of Fogarthy Springs, Hope Springs, advanced procurement for reservoir upgrades, and finalized plans to engage a consultant for the Marguerita wastewater treatment facility. This collaboration, Madam Speaker, across ministries, Montserrat Utilities Limited, and the FCDO has improved delivery momentum and is being considered as a framework for other joint initiatives. This model of integrated oversight is also being used to coordinate design, procurement, and delivery activities across ministries and executing agencies, particularly where it concerns water, sewage, and infrastructure works. Madam Speaker, procurement is one of our major challenges, but there is no hurdle that we cannot overcome.

Improving Roads and Public Buildings. We continue, Madam Speaker. The flash floods in April tested our readiness and response. Teams from Public Works and the DMCA, supported by local contractors, worked around the clock to reopen key access routes in Lookout, St. John's, and Brades within 48 hours. We record our gratitude. The April 2025 Rapid Assessment Report further underscored the need for improved household and community drainage. A rapid assessment was conducted in the aftermath of the storm. The findings identified significant damage to primary, secondary and tertiary roads, including but not limited to, roadway undermining and culvert failure at Cassava Ghaut, Carrs Bay, its surrounding drainage systems were also negatively impacted, surface erosion and embankment slippage along Woodlands Main Road and Barzeys, damage to Collins Ghaut crossing, blocked culverts and inadequate roadside drainage in flood-prone areas such as Judy Piece and parts of Salem. Persons' properties were also impacted.

Additional culvert and drainage improvements are being scoped for high-risk areas, including Carrs Bay, as identified in the report. We urge the public to manage vegetation and flood-prone areas responsibly, as together we explore further regulatory improvements to the

building code and environmental compliance, and build climate resilience. The Ministry of MALHE and BUILTE and the Minister of Finance continue to collaborate in making the area at Carr's Bay safe, as well as work with vendors. These events underscored the vulnerability of our infrastructure and have informed our medium-term priorities. This tail scoping, as I said, is underway for structural repairs and improved drainage measures to strengthen climate resilience across the road, the road network. We also press forward with the final year of the infrastructure priority agenda, supported by \$3.688 million in maintenance funding, of which \$1.27 million is allocated to roads. Early works completed this quarter and is continuing: concrete road patching in Salem and Judy Peace, patching and drainage works along flood-prone corridors, completion and continual resurfacing along the A1 Road Rehabilitation Project to include Friths, Mongo Hill, and sections of the A1 corridor.

On Buildings. I am pleased to report that the repairs, Madam Speaker, at Brades are almost completed. I am told that the kitchen is to be completed along with a few other repairs. The latter, constrained by the summer school activities, which we are happy to support, Madam Speaker, and the car park area is also in dire need of repair, and we will work with the Ministry of Education to make it user-friendly and safe. Both Salem Police Station and Brades Fire Station were given a new lease of life. Where leaks were rectified, Madam Speaker, some members of both organizations have indicated that they are satisfied. We extend substantial thanks to our contractors and the Public Works Department beautification team. Renovations are continuing at the Court and Registry, the General Post Office building, helping to bring those essential services closer to international standards. The Postal Services have returned to their offices, and Madam Speaker, I did not speak with all, but some of the members have expressed delight and satisfaction. We thank them for their patience and the inconvenience suffered and which is continuing for the registry staff. We also want to thank the public for working with us during this time. We thank the pastor and the board of the Brades Pentecostal Church for the use of the Education Center as the courthouse. Of note, Madam Speaker, also was the completion of permanent hurricane shutters at the MALHE's headquarters. This was not just an infrastructure upgrade; it signalled a thrust of building a culture of preparedness, resilience, and, I am told, was warmly praised by the officials and public alike.

Transitioning to Renewable Energy and Strengthening Utilities.

Madam Speaker, regrettably, I was not here for the volcanic conference, which would, of course, have looked at energy as well, but the Honourable Premier is more than well able, and he, I am quite confident, will share. We are building, Madam Speaker, the infrastructure to support a more sustainable and resilient future.

On the Priority Switch Project. A solar-powered waterway system was completed at Drummond's. Design work is progressing for similar systems in Davy Hill and Lookout. I am pleased to report that a new blower was installed at Lookout, allaying the impending crisis that was looming for residents at Lookout. However, we continue to prioritize that system and the sewage works. Working on connection works commenced to link Lookout's sewage plant into the dry beds at Marguerita. Preparatory works continue for the use of the pond at Jack Boy Hill as a dry bed site. Madam Speaker, with regard to energy, we have had to restore the Battery Energy Storage System, abbreviated BESS. This achieved a critical milestone this month. Just outside quarter one reporting period, after prolonged coordination, a specialist team was finally able to conduct an in-person diagnostic in early July, after about two years, a requirement for accurate fault identification.

The inspection confirmed that twelve of the thirteen battery control unit fuses had blown, with several battery racks reporting a state of charge below zero. While the root cause is now understood, replacement parts are being sourced, and a second visit will be required to complete the repair work. The BESS remains central to Montserrat's energy stability, and future renewable integration and restoration remain a priority. We do receive up to nine hundred and fifty kilowatts into the grid on good days, but without the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to manage curtailment automatically, this has to be done manually by the MUL technical staff, limiting the amount of energy that we can harness from the sun. We register our enormous thanks to Mr. Adam Pyle and the FCDO team, Dennis for the assistance, and the MUL team. Madam Speaker, I also want to register my thanks to the MUL team, who worked assiduously and tirelessly over the weekend to address a fault that affected us across the island, particularly at Isles Bay and the surrounding areas.

More broadly, the Montserrat Green Energy Transition Program, announced in May 2025 by UK Climate Minister, Honourable Ms. Ker-

ry McCarthy, commits up to £5.9 million in funding from the FCDO's Essential Equipment Program. Planning continues under the Utilities Working Group to finalize the scope of investments in renewable energy generation, storage, and grid resilience. We will continue to update this Honourable House and the public as we progress.

Number four. **Securing Montserrat's Maritime and Aviation Future.** Madam Speaker, while the Montserrat Port Development Project remains under negotiation, I wish to assure this House and the public that we are pressing forward in good faith. The Government of Montserrat and the United Kingdom Government remain aligned on the importance of this project to Montserrat's development. The Project Task Force has worked actively with the contractor and the Caribbean Development Bank to agree on a contract variation that safeguards Montserrat's long-term interests. Our focus remains on achieving a timely restart and delivering the strategic outcomes intended for a robust maritime future while we continue, at pace, namely the delivery of a fit-for-purpose port to support our access strategy, tourism, and economic and social development. Even as we await resolution on the port, Madam Speaker, we celebrated an important milestone this quarter, the commissioning of the MV Soufriere Spirit, funded through the Maritime and Coast Guard Agency's Baseline and ISF Program, aimed at supporting various maritime initiatives, including those focused on seafaring training and maritime security, to keep us, Madam Speaker, to international standard. The new vessel will support hydrographic surveys, that is, measuring and mapping of the seafloor and shoreline, maintenance of navigational aids, oil spill response, and piloted duties. Its launch was timed to support the Caribbean Boat Master Training, now underway with six participants from the Montserrat Port Authority, Royal Montserrat Police Services, Marine Unit, and Fisheries Division. Both the boat and training were fully funded by the MCA, demonstrating what is possible when local leadership is backed by strategic external partnership.

In Aviation. We are awaiting the final report from the Manchester Consulting Group, which conducted a specialist consultancy on the runway lighting system. This work, alongside the ATC tower upgrades, is critical to restoring full night-time operations. We are also preparing to commission the new air traffic control tower by October

2025, with installation works for the elevator and the fit-out of the upper floors now scheduled.

Pillar 5, Madam Speaker. **Delivering on Labour, Transport, and Ecclesiastical Responsibilities**. Our people are our most valuable asset. They provide the services required to make a country function. Excellent services are required and are key building in any five-star destination. Worker satisfaction and training are key to achieving excellence. In labour, our work this quarter focused on internal planning and capacity building. In addition to inspections and ongoing tribunal matters, the Ministry has prioritized strategic workforce development planning. We have submitted training proposals designed to equip the unemployed and underemployed, and others, with practical skills in construction, trades, and customer service excellence. These initiatives are intended to close skill gaps and improve service quality across Montserrat.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to building “one-Montserrat” and honouring its promises with the current structures and finances allowed. To that end, we at BUILTE have already drafted our papers and received feedback for Cabinet's approval of the no requirement for work permits for persons residing here for three years or more, and implementing a minimum wage. In God, Madam Speaker, the God we serve is a God of righteousness. Doing the right thing is what righteousness is about. Justice and mercy, as we would have heard this morning from our reading in Michael, are what God requires of us. In respect of outstanding work permits, I want to take this opportunity to ask all those persons who have defaulted to come in and talk to us early to ensure you can benefit once the new work permit exemption policy comes into force. My open day is on Tuesday from 10 until five o'clock, Madam Speaker, or thereafter, where the need requires me to be present. I invite you to come in on a Tuesday at least and speak to us, or book an appointment.

Madam Speaker, with respect to **transport**, we are also making amendments to the electric and hybrid vehicle exemption to progress to better support green mobility by clarifying the intent of the exemptions. We are also rethinking our approach to our airfare regulation and public transportation, with draft policies now under consideration and review.

On Ecclesiastical Affairs, we maintained engagement with faith-based institutions, including work with the Christian Council in organizing the National Day of Prayer in July. I also invite, Madam Speaker, any faith-based organization to come and let us dialogue. As we continue to explore opportunities for broader collaboration, we remain committed to strengthening partnerships in areas such as youth outreach and community resilience. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As this Honourable House, and thank you to the House, during the quarter we piloted the Seventh-day Adventist Church Amendment Bill to this Legislative Assembly, which has been assented to by Her Excellency Governor Harriet Cross, allowing the Church to progress its business and continue to fulfill its calling and to serve this present age.

Madam Speaker, I wish to register my enormous gratitude and thanks to the Christian Council or the Churches and organizations who participated in our Day of Prayer, Ministers Patterson and Persaud, who joined me in opening the day with prayers and worship, Miss Joycelyn Hogan, Miss Doniqueca Henry, Miss Michelle Cassell, and everyone, the decorators, the caterers, who contributed, and the bus driver, the Ministry of Education, who supported us. Thank you to them all. Madam Speaker, it was overseas that took me away, Madam Speaker, representing the Premier and the people of Montserrat for national service, which caused my absence during the service and the conference. This was unavoidable. I regret not being here physically for these momentous events commemorating 30 years since the volcanic eruption. Madam Speaker, we celebrate a faithful God and we seek to be a grateful people, 30 years and we are pressing to give God his due.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I attended the meetings on behalf of the Honourable Premier, which provided experience, learning, and opportunity to build relationships, cement those, Madam Speaker, with regional counterparts, and reinforce our commitment to work with our regional organization to advance the region and have a global impact. I received an exceptional welcome in both islands. The themes for both events echoed each other, both focusing on security, collaboration, sustainability, and digital sovereignty, all for the good of the people and the prosperity of the region. Dr. the most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, in his remarks, Madam Speaker, and our theme of people, partnerships and prosperity, pro-

moting a secure and sustainable future, captures the essence of the regional purpose. It reflects, as it says, a profound truth that security and resilience are not optional; they are foundations for prosperity that people-centered development and strategic partnership are not aspirational but essential. Madam Speaker, the meeting covered over 17 topics to include climate justice and finance, CARICOM external tariffs, CSME, enhanced cooperation, reparation, the Caribbean passenger goods ferry service, digital sovereignty, mobilizing support for Haiti, agriculture, 5 in 25 plus 5, and strengthening internal coordination and external partnership, which are critical to the ongoing work of the community.

The importance, Madam Speaker, of engaging our young people in shaping the decisions that affect their future, and as the Prime Minister, the most Honourable Dr. Holness reminded, it was important to engage young people in a deliberate, sustained, and meaningful manner. This cannot be done in a chaotic way. We also had a successful historical meeting of the executive and the judiciary. I also attended the swearing-in and installation ceremony of the Honourable Mr. Justice Winston Anderson, who is of Jamaican and Barbadian heritage, as Chief Justice of the CCJ. I bring, Madam Speaker, warm wishes and, Madam Speaker, from Chief Justice Byron, who served here, and Chief Justice Saunders, who also served here, when I was just a rookie on the block. But Montserrat is a favourite spot for them, and they send their best wishes.

Madam Speaker, these meetings are hard work. I want this Honourable House to know that our caucus meeting, for example, ended at 1.15 a.m. in the morning. It was work. We were not relaxing. Madam Speaker, please permit me to invite this Honourable House to celebrate the President and people of Guyana, for Guyana is one of the only countries in the world that has achieved food security. President Ali has also committed to supporting Montserrat in achieving this aspiration and allowing our students who are in school to benefit from online tutoring. The Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Ministers for Agriculture and Education will keep us updated on these collaborations.

The second assignment was attending CANTO 25. This conference was held under the theme, Towards a Unified and Sustainable Caribbean Gigabyte Society, CANTO 25. CANTO is a regional organiza-

tion, headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, that facilitates regional and internal projects in ICT critical to the region. This year, it celebrated its 40th anniversary. There were over 600 participants and over 50 countries in attendance. This is my second conference, and CANTO, I agree, is a Caribbean institution with a global reach. It's an annual conference and exhibition. This year's landmark event was held in the Bahamas and brought together regional leaders, visionaries, and changemakers to shape a digital Caribbean that is fast, fair, and future-ready. This platform, Madam Speaker, allows us to get together and amplify the Caribbean, to listen and to learn from each other, have the difficult conversations in a safe space, I must say. We held an ICT ministers meeting with CANTO's Board and directors. We had meetings as well with the regulators and the ministers, and MICA was represented by Miss Maria Silcott. Miss Silcott and I held bilateral meetings with Digicel, in which we discussed connectivity and ensuring that regulatory standards are maintained. I also met with the US representative to explore possibilities for IT infrastructure support investment, but reminding that foreign policy resides with the Governor. The conference topics were expansive, addressing topics from high-speed connectivity, cybercrime, AI, challenges with regulation, cutting-edge innovation for sustainability, economically empowered HR, tourism, and hospitality.

Emerging pillars were people, security, collaboration, trust, and accelerating digital inclusion, leaving no one behind and creating a prosperous region with digital connectivity being its backbone. I found both meetings of enormous benefit and intend to share where I can and build on what I've learned, advance some of the issues raised. Madam Speaker, I want to chronicle and thank the Honourable Premier Mr Ruben T Meade and the people of Montserrat for affording me the opportunity of representing them at these two distinguished events. However, I also must still register my regrets for not being on island here to share the National Day of Prayer and the 30th anniversary of the Soufriere Volcano Conference physically, but I was here spiritually, and Madam Speaker, I was very pleased, Madam Speaker, with my Honourable Premier. I actually thought that you know, we were going to really be having an altar call, and so Madam Speaker, we know that Reverend Joan has a partner in the Ministry when he decides to retire. He is not going to retire, Madam Speaker; he will continue working in the Master's vineyard. Madam Speaker, Honour-

able R.T. Meade, my Premier, thank you so much for the opportunities that you have afforded me.

Madam Speaker, this first quarter reflects a determination to progress under challenging conditions. The Ministry of BUILTE remains focused on the essential delivery, resilience, and reform to help Montserrat build forward better. The “one-Montserrat”, green, connected, and thriving, a five-star premium destination, is our mission. I take this opportunity to thank the dedicated staff of the Ministry, our statutory bodies, our contractors and technicians, and most importantly, the people of Montserrat for your partnership, your patience as we carry out this critical work. Madam Speaker, in conclusion, the road ahead will not be easy, but it is one we are walking together. BUILTE is committed to doing the hard work the right way, which results matter. We cannot even consider doing it alone, for we are too interconnected. We continue to work together for we know we will achieve much more. Madam Speaker, may God bless BUILTE and all the other ministries and the people of Montserrat. Thank you for affording me this opportunity in addressing this House this morning.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education and Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for permitting this short ministerial statement. In Health, we're looking forward to the signing of the Guadeloupe Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU creates a relationship with the University Hospital in Guadeloupe via an intermediary medical organization aimed at linking Guadeloupe with the English-speaking Caribbean. The relationship involves the payment of a retainer, which allows our doctors in the emergency department here 24-hour access for referrals in time-critical emergencies. This will fine-tune the medical evacuation service sending only those we need to send and creating easy pathways for critically ill patients requiring time-critical overseas intervention. Presently, work is on the way to arrange for emergency medical visas for persons who would normally require a visa to enter Guadeloupe.

The Ministry of Health is excited about this MoU as it will reduce the risk of death and permanent disability in managing the more severe complications of diabetes and hypertension prevalent in our region, and in particular will reduce death and disability rates from not only strokes and heart attacks but also major trauma and other near-tragic events. The hiring of an emergency department consultant or medical director, accident emergency consultant, the Ministry of Health has had FCDO approval for the first time ever to have this emergency medical consultant, who will double as a medical director. It is intended that the clinician in this role will be very current and up-to-date and will train, teach, and direct the department's present clinicians, adopt internationally accepted guidelines such as NICE guidelines and the UK Royal College of Emergency Medicine, and will develop specific protocols for major trauma and medical evacuation. I urge at the Ministry level that we get on with advertising the post effectively so that Montserrat can benefit from the development of the specialty of emergency medicine, proven to reduce death and disability rates in emergencies.

The ending of fees based on nationality, with all children going free: Under the United Alliance government and on the insistence of the Premier of Montserrat, we have arranged for there to be no difference in the fees paid by non-nationals and Montserratians at Glendon Hospital, specifically persons of CARICOM. This means that children who are not by law considered Montserratian can have free healthcare at Glendon Hospital and this helps to close the socio-economic gap in healthcare which affects access to care. All persons on Montserrat deserve equal access to care and all children on Montserrat regardless of nationality deserve free healthcare at Glendon.

Dialysis: the United Alliance under the leadership of the Honourable Premier are on the verge of commencing an initial one-year dialysis start-up project. We have secured funding for two dialysis nurses, a dialysis technician, and a nephrologist for one year and are waiting on the outcome of a SCAF request for equipment. Madam Speaker, chronic kidney disease is present to some degree in 25% of our district clinic population and claims the lives of two persons on Montserrat each year. Diabetes and hypertension are the most common causes of end-stage kidney disease, which, as you know, Madam Speaker, results in death unless persons leave the island to access dialysis. In ac-

cessing dialysis, there is a socio-economic disparity as persons with family abroad and resources are able to leave the island for care, while the poor with no family abroad to help stay on Montserrat and die. There are also Montserratians of the older generation who would rather die than remain in the UK, regardless of their financial circumstances. It is difficult to watch this choice be made time and time again with the same outcome, with the passing of good people who, with a local dialysis program, would remain on island, remain alive, and contribute to the island. It is hoped that once funding for the equipment has been approved by the Ministry of Finance that Montserrat can look towards having dialysis on island as early as December 2025.

Data collection with PAHO: In August and September, the PAHO team will be on Montserrat again, performing extensive data collection on health. The work of PAHO will result in the creation of a country work plan for Montserrat and will allow us to come to a definite and well-researched solution for health financing, how we pay for health care on island.

Vascular Clinics or Circulation Clinics: We can finally afford the visit of a vascular sonographer and a vascular consultant. I'm hoping that the entire island will join the Ministry of Health in September, which is World Peripheral Vascular Disease Month or circulation month, where foot screening and awareness programs organized by the health promotion unit will happen, and we are also arranging for the first time ever the visit of a vascular surgeon to Montserrat for clinics. The incidence of lower limb amputation on Montserrat is high due to the rising prevalence of diabetes and hypertension. Lower limb circulation clinics with regular visits by a vascular sonographer and vascular surgeon will now allow persons on Montserrat with circulatory problems to receive specialist input long before any need for amputation. We hope that on island we will be able to reduce our amputation rate to zero. Patients are already asking if this visit of the vascular specialist can be moved up to August, as many persons on island are at very high risk for amputation at present.

The Radiology Department: It is urgent that the Ministry of Health addresses the compensation package for our radiology staff and addresses the staff count. Our team at radiology has proven themselves

incredible in absorbing and grasping new technology. Without question, the radiology department is the department responsible for a huge and significant expanse, advances in technology that not only massively increase our ability to diagnose medical and surgical conditions on island but also hugely reduce the cost of care when taking into account that we no longer need to medevac persons overseas just for a CT diagnosis. The impact of local CT diagnosis on critical care on island and the mammography service on island when it gets started will have the most significant impact on critical care and cost than any other department. It is essential that we acknowledge this giant leap in technology, service delivery, and quality of care, and cost reduction by providing the radiology team with an adequate compensation package and staffing count. It is so uncommon to find an available radiologist to cover the work of four modalities like those we have on island. Thus the present challenge of hiring staff to cover the department with persons on leave, I urge the Ministry of Health to continue the hard work in preparing the business case for improving the remuneration package of radiology staff and increasing the staff count to acceptable levels while urgently hiring local cover in adequate proportion to cover the four modalities that we have been so blessed to have on island, that is x-ray, CT scanning, mammogram, ultrasound, all services on which our lives depend.

A business case for the hiring of local professionals, one doctor and one dentist who grew up on Montserrat and self-funded their professional education, are presently on Montserrat, registered to practice but awaiting roles with the Government of Montserrat. Again, it is with great urgency that these clinicians be hired so they can begin to make their contribution to the local community. Business cases are presently being prepared. We are presently in need of clinicians to expand our services and to improve access to care. Not only are these clinicians intelligent, articulate and eager to work hard but they are also bilingual, a useful quality on our multicultural island. It is important for us as a Ministry going forward to ensure that all persons on island have equal opportunity as we push forward in developing the island.

Education, Madam Speaker. Levelling test, streaming, and support: Education officers for secondary education have been advised again this week to abolish the levelling test at the Montserrat Second-

ary school. The Education team now has one month to meet with teachers, parents, and the education administration to come up with a more suitable approach to streaming students. This order to abolish the levelling test follows on by a command by the director of education to abolish this test in January of this year, which has not yet been met by the school. The levelling test is a 15-year-old test that is no longer used in the rest of the world. It tends to stream students down into lower sets because the test often meets the students unprepared. The Ministry of Education is also insisting that students at the Montserrat Secondary School who have not been performing as well as they should, who have been placed in lower sets, will receive the academic focus and lift that they require to show improved performance. It is essential that students of all levels of performance receive the support of the Ministry, which must do all it can to meet the needs of students.

Homerooms for the Montserrat Secondary School: The Ministry of Education has also planned for September 2025 that students will have homerooms where they can leave their bags, eat lunch, and have a base. At the secondary level, the classrooms belong to the teachers and the students, a near 300-strong population, migrate from class to class throughout the day, loiter if there is no class, and eat lunch on the ground as they have nowhere to belong. We have made the decision to return to the position of students having homerooms, and these homerooms will be staffed to prevent behavioural problems and damage to property.

Curriculum: We have firm decisions on curriculum. As we go forward, it's really essential that teachers, administrators in education, parents, and students are on the same page in terms of curriculum, and we intend to insist on this going forward. For other projects in education, we await the commencement of the role of project manager education under education transformation. This postholder will roll out projects such as our special educational needs project, technical and vocational subjects' programs, a teacher retention program, safeguarding programs such as the summer program and after-school programs, literacy and numeracy, literacy, numeracy, and science catch-up programs, and the huge project of digital transformation in education. In the meantime, there have been several jobs which have been adver-

tised in special educational needs, as we prepare to create the framework for special educational needs in staffing and policy making.

The summer program, the summer program which arose out of the concept of the need to safeguard our children, intended to cap students at 300 in number over the summer, but has maxed at 215 students due to budgetary constraints. The program is having a positive impact on students so far. The present focus of the Ministry on keeping costs down is to ensure that the program becomes an affordable part of what we do in education. Lessons learned from this summer program will be invaluable in planning the 2026 safe summer program. We intended to feed children, but we haven't. The intention was to institute the new youth nutrition policy to feed the children healthy food prepared on site, with the involvement of some of the students in the preparation. For multiple reasons, including budgetary constraints, this has not happened. Science has proven that the only effective way to have a significant impact on the high and rising prevalence rates of diabetes and hypertension is to modify dietary intake and exercise patterns in the school-age population. So, for me, it is very disappointing that we are not this summer picking out food items from local farmers, discussing the nutritional content with our nutritionist, using local cooks in the community center and schools to feed our children healthy meals prepared according to the youth nutrition policy. Healthy eating and regular exercise hugely reduce the risk of developing diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol, and thus reduce the incidence of life and limb-threatening complications such as stroke, heart attack, circulatory problems, kidney disease, and the reduction in quality of life that comes about due to visual impairment.

As we go forward in nurturing and protecting the youth of this island, we hope that this information about how they should eat and live will somehow filter its way into the school system. Healthy food, plenty of exercise in the students' safer, calmer, and more balanced school environment, we hope will create a new dawn of heavy focus on safety, academic support, and general well-being. The Ministry of Education is hoping for community center-based after-school clubs that allow our children to be safe and fed. We have not yet secured funds for these after-school programs, but we are certain that under the umbrella of safeguarding, which is very relevant in our environment that funding shall be found. It is essential that we protect our children.

That's it from me for this ministerial statement, Madam Speaker. Thank you for your patience and tolerance.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, first, may I commend both Ministers for their comprehensive reports. This is the manner in which we expect to report and keep the public abreast of what we're doing. However, Madam Speaker, my intervention will start with a preamble which is slightly different from that of the Ministers, and then I'll get into the updates.

Madam Speaker, the Montserrat many of us knew prior to 1995 is different. So too must our politics. This little island home of ours was built by people who believed in God, honesty, and truth. I am personally saddened, disappointed, and deeply concerned by the recent behaviour of the Opposition group after the Resolution presented by them during the June sitting of this Honourable Assembly. When they left this Honourable place, they engaged in one of the most shameful and duplicitous campaigns ever witnessed in my over 25 years of political life in Montserrat. They decided that our people do not have the capacity to understand government and governance.

They deliberately tried to deceive our people at home and abroad. They hope that people would not have seen through their trickery and chicanery.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo, said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

What is your Point of Order?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, is this a ministerial statement? Is it a debate? Will the Opposition be allowed to rebut what is being said? Unless that is the case, according to the rules, no one is allowed to speak and create controversial issues and make argumentative statements without giving the other side a chance to rebut.

Madam Speaker said:

Which order are you referring to?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, that is the principle of debate in this House. Ministerial statements, statements on the adjournment. Is this a statement on the adjournment? Is this a ministerial statement? What is it, Madam Speaker? According to the rules, could you please tell me?

Madam Speaker said:

He requested to make a ministerial statement, and he was allowed to do so.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Pardon me, Madam Speaker, can he make a ministerial statement that's controversial, creates argument, and does not allow the Opposition to rebut? That's the question.

Madam Speaker said:

Which part of it is controversial, Honourable Member?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, he's accusing the Opposition of being dishonest and a whole lot of things that are straightforward and obvious, Madam Speaker. We must be able to rebut that. Otherwise, he should not be allowed to continue.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, as I indicated, I would have had a preamble to the updates which I will give, and Madam Speaker, there's a statement that people tend to use sometimes, when you throw a stone in a pig pen, it's a pig that gets hit, squeal. So, if I may be permitted to Continue.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier, continue please.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

What is your Point of Order?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I have not gotten a response. He was allowed to make statements. Are we going to be able to rebut what he said? Whether it's a preamble or not, he should not be allowed to make a statement accusing the Opposition without giving us a chance to respond. And I'd like to get a ruling on that, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

And the ruling is that there will be no response. Continue, Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, Parliament is continuous and if they wish to rebut, they clearly have an opportunity to do so in a different forum or at a later date. May I continue?

Madam Speaker said:

Please.

The Honourable Premier said:

Where was I? They decided that our people do not have the capacity to understand government and governance. They deliberately tried to deceive our people at home and abroad. They hoped that people would not have seen through their trickery and chicanery. They tried to give the impression that by bringing a Resolution to solicit a commitment to increase welfare assistance that if the government side voted against it, as we were obliged to do, that we were turning our backs on persons in need. It was a strategy deliberately designed to deceive and mislead, duplicitous. They made themselves into social media profligates. They were reckless, extreme and excessive in their attempt to deceive.

The presenter of the motion was told that the way in which the FCDO and indeed the international community operates is now data-driven and not based just on emotion, bluster and innuendo. I also find this dishonesty so overwhelming that today, a question is asked about the same issues I raised with them, which they claim they had no knowledge of. We must seek at the political level, not to deceive the electorate by giving them the impression that we are concerned about people's welfare when our actions say otherwise. Both Honourable Romeo, as Premier and Honourable Lewis, as Minister for Labour, for the period 2014 to 2019, do not have a record of doing much for our poor of this island. They did not increase welfare payments. Yet, we are putting systems in place to obtain data for us to make a case and are being accused of being unsupportive of the welfare of our people.

We must remember, as well, that there was a budget presentation in April, and they made no input into the request for welfare increases at that opportune time. However, their focus was on how much more money could be allocated to the Opposition Office. Madam Speaker, we lost a decade of progress because the administrations of that decade, especially 2014, of that decade, 2014 to 2024, but especially the 2014 to 2019 period, were so caught up in undoing anything the administration prior to 2014 had in place, as far as they could and continue to focus both on the misconstrued view that if they kept shouting

that we have a first call on UK funds, that it would have materialized. They still do not understand that the world of international finance does not work through shouting, as they want us to do, as exemplified in the recent Resolution. It is all about data and making supported cases to the funding agencies. We must always be fiscally responsible. To date, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker said:

Hold on, Honourable Premier. I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, Madam Speaker, I want to give some clarity to the Premier through you, in that he speaks of not having data. The Opposition did present data in the Resolution, presented two documentations, one that was done by the Office of the Deputy Governor and an earlier one. So, there were two documentations of data. I wanted to give clarification on that. He stated there was no data.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if one were to look at the date of that data, it fell within the time frame and timeline when they were in office, and they did nothing about it.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Clarification, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, go ahead, Honourable.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Madam Speaker, that is not correct. The date clearly showed that it was done under the previous government and not the PDM government, so the Premier is misleading the public.

Madam Speaker said:

The previous government, as in what time period, sorry.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

It was done during the previous government. MCAP's government. That's when the report was done, not your time. The previous government before this government.

Madam Speaker said:

2019 to 2024?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

I am referring to the documentation that was done by the Office of the Deputy Governor.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, Honourable Romeo. What is your Point of Order?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

The study, the review of welfare, was done in 2013 or 2014 under the very Premier who is speaking right now. There were two studies, one done by the government just before this and the other one was done under his leadership. So, there are two studies.

Madam Speaker said:

The studies were presented with those dates?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Correct, Madam Speaker. And Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker, nowhere in our presentation did we ask for any amount of money to be agreed on. It asked for consideration, not for us to raise the figures, but to work together to address it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier, do you want to clarify?

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Romeo for correcting the Honourable Lewis, that in fact they had the data during their time in government and did nothing about it. Am I correct?

Madam Speaker said:

Listen, let us not continue our back and forth on this. Let us try and move on, please.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Madam Speaker, we are not going to drag it out. I just want to give clarification. There were two reports. Honourable Romeo referred to one report that was done in 2013 and the second report that I referred to was done at a later stage during the last MCAP government.

Madam Speaker said:

I think I understand, and I think I can agree with what I saw.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, they are indeed indicating that I am correct that the report was done, and they had it during their time in administration.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier, let us move on with this statement.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, they're the ones who raised the issue about data and the validity of the data. Yes, and I'm talking about the one which came to you during your time, which you did nothing about.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, Honourable Premier, move on, please.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order again, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Could you please indicate what your Point of Order is, Honourable Romeo?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. He just reminded me, too, Madam Speaker, that he was not...

Madam Speaker said:

No, that is not a Point of Order.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

A clarity as to what was said. He just said something in that it was available when we were in office. So, he did not tell the truth when he said there was no data and that our presentation was based on emotion. So, there was data. So, he too is not being honest because he should know about the study that was done during his time and that it was presented.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier, can we continue with the ministerial statement, please?

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if you'll permit me, I must clarify that, in fact, a study was done, as indicated by Honourable Romeo, in 2013. And the point I was trying to get across was a very simple one, that they were in office from 2014 to 2019 and even the data which they had at that time, they did not use it. Did you give an increase? And the answer to that is no.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, I think it was established.

The Honourable Premier said:

If I may, Madam Speaker, if I may, Madam Speaker....

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Premier, I think it has been established that the dates of the report, can we continue with the ministerial statement, please?

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, just to clarify, data becomes dated. And therefore, we have been requested by the FCDO to do a comprehensive study, which we have commenced. We can't use the data from 2014 or 2013, or indeed that of 2019. And we have given a commitment that on the conclusion of that study, we will have a discussion as to how much could be provided based on the results of that study. So, Madam Speaker, to date, we have approved, subject to no objection from our funding agent, the FCDO, for the implementation, hopefully by September 1st, 2025, the reduction in freight charges by 50% in the calculation of import charges. However, although we have been assured by the major supermarkets and hardware stores of their compliance, we will implement an audit team within the Customs Department to ensure compliance.

Additionally, we have reduced the tariff rate on 13 construction materials. The combined impact of the freight reduction and the duty and

consumption tax adjustments will make some small but important reductions in the cost of living. Madam Speaker, the savings may be small, but as the saying goes, “one, one raindrop bring down river.” We are also seeking to treat goods imported from the Dominican Republic in a similar manner as CARICOM goods. This strategic shift will enable us to have low-cost goods entering our market from the Dominican Republic.

Access. For over a decade, we have not been able to land Twin Otter aircraft at the John Osborne Airport. We now have Winair from St. Marten three days per week in the low season and expect to have seven days per week to include flights to Montserrat from Antigua return, in December and March. Seven days per week. So, they'll come from St. Marten to Montserrat, then Montserrat to Antigua, Antigua to Montserrat, then back to St. Marten. This will be coupled with Twin Otter operations by SVG starting in the not-too-distant future, but before the peak month of December. Madam Speaker, I have been assured that the SVG Twin Otter operation could start as early as September of this year. Madam Speaker, we have, working with the airlines, reduced the airfares in and out of Montserrat substantially. This has led to higher demand for travel into and out of Montserrat. For example, it is less expensive from Montserrat to St. Marten than it is from Antigua to St. Marten. Now that we have principally sorted out the air access with a few additional technical issues still to be resolved, we have moved on to commence work on the invitation to tender for ferry services.

I wish to thank the Honourable Romeo for withdrawing his Resolution, which came out possibly by mistake, seeking the Legislative Assembly's support of another petition to the British Government for support on access. Thank you, sir. It would have been a total waste of our time, although they would have tried to use it in their radio program to spread mischief and misinformation. HMG is providing generous support in this regard, and we are exploring several options, including the purchasing of our own vessel.

Other initiatives. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Education, Health and Community Services have spoken about this, but I will repeat it. We have approved in Cabinet that all children, irrespective of where they were born or their immigration status, be treated in

the same manner as children of Montserrat nationality. The final details are being sorted for implementation by September of this year. We are awaiting final submission to Cabinet later in August for an immigration reform policy where persons resident in Montserrat for three years or more will have an immigration waiver. They will no longer need to go in for time. We also anticipate that this will come into effect by September. We are also awaiting a paper similar to the immigration reform, dealing with work permits, which I am hoping we can have before Cabinet before the end of August.

The soft loan programme is being finalized, awaiting the completion of the MoU and further details to be finalized between Government and Bank of Montserrat. We anticipate that these issues will be resolved in very short order. The loans are in two categories, \$1 million for agriculture and fisheries, \$1 million for micro-enterprises. Using the banking system takes away political interference as to who gets funding and who does not. It also encourages fiscal discipline where persons will be encouraged to open and operate bank accounts for their businesses.

We, working through the OECS, will soon be able to access scholarships to Nigeria. The details are being worked on and hopefully by next academic year these will be available to our students. We also wish to thank the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, and in particular my colleague the Honourable Gaston Brown, for the offer of scholarships to attend the Five Island campus of the UWI. These will be taken up this academic year.

After a decade of waiting, Delta now has a formal lease and supply agreement with the Government. I have seen the analysis and nuendo of our social media experts, but now is not the time to respond to those. Needless to say, when a monopoly supplier operates within a community, that is when a clearly defined supply agreement is necessary. So, the armchair economists can continue their discussions and they can continue their innuendo.

We had promised to reduce the frequency and length of power outages and fix the cause. We must commend the MUL team for their hard work. We currently have another engineer on island assisting with a power system upgrade. As part of the Green Energy Resilience Pro-

ject, we are hoping to be able to put some of the power lines underground, which will reduce the incidence of outages along with the introduction of remote air breakers for greater control from the power station in isolating line faults, which will reduce the shutting down of the entire power system because of faults on a line in one location. The recent outages of this weekend were not a fault of the generating plant, but a fault on the line in one location.

Madam Speaker, we inherited a project gone woefully wrong. The port project, or the jetty project, as I prefer to call it. We have been working with the Caribbean Development Bank, the local team, the consultants, the contractor, and HMG to try and find a resolution so that we can have this project restarted. The principal issues are: funding from CDB runs out in March of 2026. The contractor had draw-downs greater than the completed works. The contractor is seeking additional financing to complete the project. The contractor is indicating it will take a further 12 months from resuming to completion of this project. Against this backdrop, we have sought to put in place additional project management systems to better manage the project and indeed the funds. HMG has indicated an offer of additional funds, but require a no objection from CDB. CDB is currently reviewing the updated contract and management systems. We are indeed very hopeful, Madam Speaker, that we're nearing that no objection letter from CDB in order to restart the project. At the strategic level, we will ensure that very close monitoring will take place going forward.

The hospital minor works are well on the way to completion. The major works element of the project, that is the main hospital building, is progressing well. We have instituted project management systems to ensure that government is abreast of the progress and any issues which may impact its timely completion and within budget are addressed early.

The Cultural Centre renovation project has received its fair share of criticism. Let's have the facts. Funds were allocated for a parliament building, yes. We came into office and found no final drawings or any consensus on what was to be BUILTE. Preliminary drawings done by an outside architect when costed would have been significantly more than the funds which were allocated. Government, contrary to many of the public comments, cannot tender for any construction works

knowing fully well that the funds for completion are not available. The funds have a terminal disbursement date of 31st March, 2026. If the funds are not used by that date, we will lose the funds.

A Cabinet decision, Madam Speaker, was taken and presented to the FCDO seeking permission to utilize the funds for the refurbishment of the cultural center, which for the time being will double as the home of the Legislative Assembly. As we speak, we are seeking to tender the works for the Cultural Centre in early August to enable us to spend the majority of the funds by the deadline date of 31st March, 2026, or indeed have the project completed. These are the facts. However, prior to issuing contracts, in spite of the fact that we're going out to tender, further Cabinet and FCDO approvals must be given for the allocation and drawdown of the sums for the project. In other words, when you have the tender documents coming in, then you'll know roughly what the costs are and the details of the cost, and then you'll get the final approval. But that must be done in Cabinet and also in consultation with the FCDO. Madam Speaker, there are many arm-chair ministers of finance who have no knowledge of how government financing works and the conditions surrounding those funds. Madam Speaker, neither I nor my colleagues have that liberty of seeking to go against the terms of government project funding and indeed the procedures.

The water and sewage project valued at \$24.4 million is progressing and hopefully will be completed before the March deadline. The project comprises four major components; springs rehabilitation, reservoir construction, the distribution network rehabilitation, and the wastewater facilities. Collectively, these subprojects are aimed at modernizing Montserrat's water infrastructure, improving public health and environmental standards, increasing system resilience to climate and disaster risk, and enabling sustainable development across the island. Together, these interventions are delivering critical upgrades to both the supply and treatment systems and ensuring that long-term access to safe, reliable water and sanitation services for the people of Montserrat are achieved. Madam Speaker, permit me to thank the team that has been working on this project and I have been assured that they will in fact bring this project in within the time frame and within cost. The BNTF program has provided an extension to Montserrat for inclusion in BNTF 11 and they have done so with a

much larger quantum of funds than prior years and this is being programmed for timely implementation as well.

The Green Energy Transition Project, to the tune of \$5.9 million to be spent again by March 31st 2026, is in the preparatory stages. Despite the late approval of these funds and the very tight timelines, we are working diligently to be up to the challenge. Madam Speaker, at a meeting this morning with the UK team and they said yes, we know we're giving you a tight timeline for this, but they have been assured that this administration can deliver.

Ambulances. We have been working diligently with the NHS in obtaining two additional ambulances along with the training support. For this, we give thanks. We now have three functional ambulances and the information which I'm getting from the consultants who were here is that the Montserrat team, including the team at BUILTE who looks after the maintenance and the knowledge of those new systems, is excellent compared to other areas and the training of our paramedics is also beyond that of some other territories in the region and for that we give thanks.

We are currently awaiting tender submissions for geothermal well-flowing and testing. This will do two things. Enable the testing of the mineralogy of the fluids to determine if there are economic quantities of valuable minerals. Yes, we know that there are likely to be valuable minerals, but the question is are they in economic mineable quantities? And also, Madam Speaker, this will determine the well production potentials for geothermal power. We are currently looking at ways to move as soon as possible into geothermal production and the expected additional benefits through other industries which will come on stream as a consequence of geothermal energy.

Madam Speaker, we as a responsible government are seeking to bring resilient prosperity to the people of this island. We do this by transparency in our operations, honesty and integrity, but inclusive. Inclusive in that all decisions which may impact on HMG resources are discussed and agreed with them before proceeding. No bluster, providing the information. And also providing information to the public which we are not hiding to do whether the information or the reports are good or bad. At the strategic level, HMG sits at the table for

these higher-level meetings and also at the level of the subordinate project working group meetings. We are a collaborative government and we'll always share as far as possible honest updates to the people.

Madam Speaker, if you'll permit me through this forum to say a very big thank you to Matthew Noble, sorry for calling names, Madam Speaker, but I have to in this case, who will be leaving us, but who has been a tremendous resource to us in terms of moving our projects forward and also Adam Pyle from the office in the UK. They're both moving on and I want to publicly put it on record our appreciation and thanks for the tremendous work which they have been doing for us.

Madam Speaker, in closing, we ask one thing of the PDM team who seemingly do not wish to be part of the "one-Montserrat" project. However, we're asking them to be critical, keep us on our toes, but be responsible and honest Opposition. Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you very much for the opportunity and may God continue to bless us all.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Let me, just a minute, Madam Clerk. I've reconsidered the decision I made earlier. Bearing in mind the concerns of the Members of the Opposition and their desire to provide clarification on the statement just made. I am mindful that Parliament will be on recess next month and while the matter is relevant, I will offer an opportunity on the adjournment for what clarification you may wish to make, but I'm stressing brief, a brief 10 minutes each, which would be half an hour for your team, okay, on the adjournment. Thanks.

6. GOVERNMENT NOTICES
7. UNOFFICIAL NOTICES
8. QUESTIONS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for BUILTE from Honourable Paul Lewis, Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to ask these questions. I have questions to the Honourable Minister of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour and Transportation. Question one.

- 1. Given the serious delays and constant failure to meet its obligations, even after the government granted the company constructing the seaport several extensions and over half the money budgeted to build the port already spent to the tune of \$80-plus million, why did the government agree to pay a further \$13 million to the company to proceed with work after the sudden halt of the project?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

The Government of Montserrat acknowledges the public concern surrounding the delays and interruptions experienced in the execution of the Montserrat Port Development Project. It is important to provide clarity on the matter of payments made and account stats of the contract. To date, Meridian Construction Company Limited has been paid \$64 million under the existing \$107 million contract. These disbursements covered completed works, equipment and materials procured and delivered to the site in accordance with the approved interim payment certificates and verified by the engineer. It should be emphasised that these payments are not discretionary but are made in compliance with the terms of the contract and based on the work duly certified. The government has not, Mr Lewis, in the event that you got, you're not listening to me? I'm sorry, I'm sorry, you're with me?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Honourable Minister, I'm reading your response as you speak.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you so much, because there was a mistake made in the first document that may have been sent hence why I'm saying that. So, the government has not agreed to pay an additional \$13 million to the contractor following the unexpected suspension of the project. No such payment has been approved. At present, the government, in collaboration with its stakeholders, including the Caribbean Development Bank, CDB and UK CIF, is engaged in ongoing negotiations aimed at restarting the project. These discussions have been held with strict adherence to the contract provision. Any proposal for additional costs must be fully justified, reviewed and approved in accordance with the contractual terms and conditions. This includes clear documentation, technical validation and financial accountability. The government remains committed to the completion of the Montserrat Port Development Project, and I thank you, Honourable Lewis, for that question.

Madam Speaker said:

Are you finished? Take your mic off, please. I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Honourable Speaker, with your permission, one supplementary.

Madam Speaker said:

Let us hear it.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

I want to refer to the answer given in the end of your second paragraph. 'Any proposal for additional costs must be fully justified, reviewed and approved in accordance with the contractual terms and conditions. This includes clear documentation, technical validation and financial accountability.' Thus, I want to ask, does this mean the contractor will resume construction before any further funds are paid to them?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, as I indicated, we are still in discussion with the contractors, CDB and UK CIF. If the contractor comes up with something that justifies or the team, which is CDB, UK CIF and FCDO, agrees to that, Madam Speaker, then that perhaps can happen. But at this stage, nothing of that sort has happened. So I cannot answer that because it would be a hypothetical answer that I would be giving you. And I do not want to mislead yourself or this Honourable House. So, if that comes up and we have agreed on another question, what will happen. So, I'll wait for that question. Okay, I will certainly inform this Honourable House and yourself.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Question 2.

- 2. In light of the failure to deliver our port as scheduled, for what is suggested to be partly due to inadequate oversight, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, will the Honourable Minister commit to quarterly public progress reports to this Parliament detailing milestone achievements, spending to date and delays encountered?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Again, Honourable Lewis, thank you so much for this question and your concerns. In light, as you have said, of the failure to deliver, I acknowledge the concerns raised regarding delays in the Montserrat Port Development Project and the importance of transparent and accountable project oversight. I can confirm that once negotiations are concluded and the project formally resumes, the Government is fully committed to strengthening governance and accountability measures. As part of this commitment, we will provide quarterly progress reports to this Parliament, which will include updates on milestone

achievements, a summary of project expenditure to date, an outline of any delays encountered and measures taken to address them. These take into consideration the commercial and legal sensitivity of some of the information that may be required at a particular point.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Question 3.

- 3. Can the Honourable Minister explain the content of the proposal put forward to CDB in an effort to restart work at the Port Development Project and state the reasons given by CDB for not providing a no object to the proposal?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Honourable Lewis. The Government of Montserrat, in collaboration with project stakeholders, has, as I referred to above, CDB, UK CIF, FCDO and our strategic team here, has submitted a revised no objection request to CDB. This proposal outlines key conditions for the remobilization of the contractor, including a defined timeline for the completion of the project, strengthened fiscal governance measures such as the establishment of a designated joint account jointly managed by the Government and the contractor, direct disbursement by CDB to critical suppliers to ensure continuity and accountability, the requirement for performance and payment bonds to secure both remobilization activities and supplier payments, a commitment to strict adherence to the original contract terms and conditions with no deviation permitted. It is important to note that a previous no objection submission had included the contractor's costs to complete the project, which was not accepted by CDB.

The current submission has been refined in response to the Bank's feedback and seeks to address the Bank's concerns regarding risk mitigation and cost justification. At this stage, CDB has not yet issued a formal response to the revised no objection request. Given that negotiations are ongoing and in the interest of preserving the integrity of this discussion, I implore you, sir, that I am not at liberty to disclose further details at this time, but as promised, when that is available, I will share. However, I wish to assure you that the Government remains actively engaged with the CDB, UK CIF and FCDO and is hopeful of a favourable outcome that will allow for the resumption of construction in a manner that is both financially sound and contractually compliant.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, a supplementary through you. As per the answer, bullet point 3, direct disbursement by CDB to critical suppliers to ensure continuity and accountability is one of the conditions in terms of ensuring that you can have a no objection going forward.

My supplementary question to you, does this disbursement by CDB to critical suppliers, does it include locals and local businesses who are still owed for their services by the company constructing the port?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Honourable Lewis. At this point, as far as I know, they will supply, will be supplied with the list and CDB will then determine whether this amounts to a critical supplier. But this has not yet been done, as I said before. Once it's done, I will certainly share.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

I just want to make sure you understood my question. I just want to make sure you understand my question. So... I just want to make sure you understand my question, so that I'm not trying to trick you or anything, but I want you to be clear.

Madam Speaker said:

Please repeat it then.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, I'm asking, as you answered in bullet point 3, you said direct disbursement by CDB to critical suppliers to ensure continuity and accountability. I am not sure if these critical suppliers you're referring to include locals who are still owed for accommodation and other services. So, I... are you listening? Yes, I'm not sure if these critical suppliers referred to include locals who are owed for accommodation and other services provided. So, I'm asking you, think carefully before you answer me. I'm asking you if the payment by CDB to critical suppliers includes these locals that are owed for their services?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Honourable Lewis. Like yourself, we do have that concept for our local suppliers, but we have two avenues. One, the critical suppliers to ensure continuity and accountability. We have one set that CDB would deal with directly, and that is the international ones. Then we're going to have another joint account locally, where we will deal with what needs to be paid here in Montserrat. So, provision is being made to address those who have outstanding payments through that arrangement. And when it is finalized, we can then share further that this is concretised and this is the way we are going. But, like yourself, I am personally, and the rest of the team, are very concerned about our persons who have not received payments for goods and services, supplies, and in some cases, employment. Yes.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you for the clarification. So now the locals would know that CDB is not paying them anything, but the local government is possibly going to pay them. That's what I wanted to make clear.

Madam Speaker said:

Let us move on, please.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Sorry. Did I say something wrong?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes, let me clarify. CDB still has to approve all the payment avenues. So CDB is involved. But as we said, we are having that joint bank account with the contractor where government will look at what needs to be done and consent, so to speak, so we know that the monies are going directly to our suppliers, whether it be services or goods, here on Montserrat. As I said before, once all of this is clarified, I will come back to this Honourable House and I will give the information. I am not averse at all to doing that, but we want to be clear that all is agreed with CDB, and that is the way we are going. So, these are what these suggestions, these bullet points, are what was put forward to CDB. And as you would have heard, we are still discussing. So once all of that is clarified, agreed, I will share that information. I do not want to mislead neither yourself, this Honourable House, or our public. And I know the concerns, and we have that concern as well, for our local suppliers and workers as well. Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, thank you for that clarification. It is very important. Madam Speaker, one other supplementary on this question, if permitted.

Madam Speaker said:

You have already had a supplementary, which was a bit of a deviation from the original question.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

No, it was not a deviation. And the Minister correctly gave the clarification because she saw where I was coming from. I even asked her to carefully think about it before she answered me.

Madam Speaker said:

You asked for the reason that CDB gave for the no objection. So, she did not really have to go on.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

No, no, no, you are talking about the actual question.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, and that is what the supplementary should be based on, and I notice that we have been going away...

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

The answer that I was given. I cannot ask supplementary on anything other than the answer that is given to me. So, the answer given to me, I refer to it. I did not go outside the answer.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, Honourable Lewis, let us move on. But, you know, the rules say you are allowed a supplementary.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

So, you are saying I cannot ask another supplementary?

Madam Speaker said:

No, that is right. You can go on to the next question.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Question 4.

4. Following CDB is not issuing the no objection, can the Honourable Minister state the next steps and date of the restart of the port project?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE. Put your microphone on, please.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

The next step in response to the question regarding the next steps and the expected restart date for the Montserrat Port Development Project, I provide the following update. As previously stated, the Government of Montserrat has recently resubmitted a revised no objection request to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), following prior feedback from the bank. This revised submission addresses key issues raised by CDB and includes strengthened fiscal controls, a remobilisation framework and continued adherence to the terms of the existing contract. At present, we are awaiting a formal response from the CDB. As such, a definitive restart date for the project cannot be confirmed at this time. The Government remains in active dialogue with the bank, that is CDB, and is hopeful of receiving a favourable decision in the near future.

Once the CDB grants its no objection, the Government will then move swiftly to finalise the contract amendment, finalise arrangements for the contractor's remobilisation, initiate the implementation of fiscal governance measures and resume physical works on the site, guided by a revised schedule. We understand the urgency of this project and the importance it holds for the people of Montserrat. The Government remains fully committed to its completion. I will update this Honourable House as soon as a clear timeline becomes available.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. One supplementary through you.

Madam Speaker said:

Go on.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Honourable Minister, supplementary. I notice that your submission is based on once the CDB grants. It's no objection, the government will swiftly move on to etc. etc.

My question to you, what if after these negotiations CDB do not grant the no objection? Is the Government prepared to take legal actions or is the contract, the present contract, given that it is stated that the amount of funds paid out to the company is actually more funds than the equivalent work delivered to date. So, my question to you, if after the negotiations and CDB should come back and say they still do not give a no objection, is the Government prepared to take necessary legal actions to ensure that the port is resumed and the people of Montserrat can have the port that is promised to them?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as I indicated before, I want to give full information to this House, and that includes the Honourable Minister. However, this question is a hypothetical question and, in these circumstances, and the level of contract that you are dealing with, I can only answer the Honourable Minister, sorry, the Honourable Member by saying when we get to that bridge, we will cross it, and I will certainly inform this House of what the steps would be if that were to happen.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Land, Housing and the Environment, Youth Affairs & Sports from Honourable Paul Lewis, Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

I would like to thank the Minister for answering the questions put forward to her, and I do have some other questions here for the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs and Sports. The first question reads,

- 1. With recent announcement by the Honourable Minister to boost chicken production by 50% of locally consumed chicken, can the Honourable Minister therefore advise this Honourable House of specific production targets for local chicken outputs this year as compared to previous years and what infrastructure investments or support systems such as feed supply or biosecurity measures has the Ministry of Agriculture put in place to sustain this proposed increase in chicken production?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the border production data for 2024/2025 fiscal year was 44,662.5 pounds and that was derived from 9,925 birds. We have an average of about 4.5 pounds per bird. So far for the 2025/26 financial year, the data indicates that 3,100 chicks have been imported, some of which have not yet been slaughtered. The 50% increase, Madam Speaker, targeted of 15,000 chicks or 67,500 pounds of broiler meat is set for the 2026/2027 financial year when the Ministry would have commissioned the requisite necessary support to the broiler industry. The Agricultural Development Program, Madam Speaker, has funding earmarked for broiler pen construction and that would yield a gradual increase of up to about 2,000 additional birds per month. There are also plans to con-

struct a new poultry slaughtering and processing facility that will be able to handle the current production of the intended increase and more. Madam Speaker, with regards to the support systems, the Ministry has a well-established biosecurity unit with robust protocols as well as support provided by extension officers. Therefore, Madam Speaker, an increase in broiler production does not pose a biosecurity risk. There are also two feed companies which supply the relatively small agricultural sector so there are no supply issues anticipated with the proposed increase in production.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, I thank the Minister for that answer. One supplementary, if permitted.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, you may.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, as you referred to increasing the production and feed, there have been always complaints about the cost of feed and the constant rise in the cost of feed due to inflation.

To ensure that you achieve your goal of doubling the production, are there any provisions or preparations or money allocated to provide subsidies to feeds in the case where feeds increase?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, I'll just answer the question simply. As you would have heard, the Honourable Premier before me would have mentioned in his address that we are doing what he calls a reduction in the

freight side of the importation bill, so that too would affect feed as well since I think the freight is quite a significant cost in the feed. So, the Government is looking on a whole to reduce not just feed but anything imported to make things cheaper in Montserrat. To answer your direct question about financial subsidies, these are things that we can look into. But again, as I said, we are already anticipating that there will be a reduction when the Ministry of Finance implements that freight side of things.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

I thank the Minister for his answer. Number 2.

- 2. Can the Honourable Minister provide a detailed update of the operational status of the equipment at the Abattoir, including which units are currently non-functional, the impact on service delivery, and what steps are being taken to restore full operational capacity? That's (a). And (b), outline the current maintenance schedule for the Abattoir, including the frequency of preventative and corrective maintenance?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Abattoir is currently operational and providing services to the livestock farmers. The freezer and chiller that are in the Abattoir building itself are currently not operational. However, Madam Speaker, the Ministry already had two 20-foot refrigerated containers on site and set up since the COVID pandemic to serve as backup for the ageing chiller and freezer. Generally, Madam Speaker, the equipment is serviced annually. Replacement and repairs of parts occur as necessary during the financial year. Madam Speaker, this year's Agriculture Development Program will provide financing for the procurement of new equipment

such as a chill, freezer, electric cattle hoist, and a compressor. Some minor upgrades to the building are also planned, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Minister. Question 3.

3. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether the Ministry has the financial capacity to ensure the timely and effective execution of maintenance services at the Abattoir and also to settle all outstanding payments for these services rendered at the Abattoir? If so, can the Honourable Minister provide a timeline for when these payments will be made?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, please.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has the financial capacity to pay for any services we have requested. There is a single outstanding payment relating to the repair of the chill and the freezer. The engagement with the service provider is currently ongoing to bring this matter to a resolution. We want to ensure that the Ministry secures value for government expenditure.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank the Honourable Minister for answering the questions. I do have questions for the Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services. First question being,

- 1. Can the Honourable Minister advise or remind this Honourable House and citizens of the planned services profile for the new hospital, for example, bed counts, speciality services offered, and explain how these align with the healthcare needs once the facility becomes operational?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health. Put your mic on, please.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm assuming I'm answering the right question here. Thanking the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his relevant question. The new hospital will have 25 beds. This is 5.8 beds per 1,000 population compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 population for the 67-bedded 1995 hospital. That was our previous new build that hospital workers were not able to move into. And comparing that 5.8 as well to the 3.1 beds per 1,000 population of the 40-bedded hospital BUILTE in 1973 that we used well into the 80s and early 90s. So, 5.8 beds per 1000 is not bad at the moment, considering the present population. The emergency area is comprised of a triage plus multiple assessment and resa space. The resa space would have ease of access to CT and X-ray, as in a first-world hospital. This emergency department will be managed by an emergency medical consultant who will adopt current guidelines and protocols for the department, train staff, arrange physician duty, and keep the department on target with the highest standards of care. The team created in emergency medicine as a result of this, the presence of this consultant, will all practice in accordance with international standards in emergency care. And now, through the modern, clear, and effective MoU with Guadeloupe, which was described earlier, our time-critical cases will be taken care of through a swift process with immediate access to a pathway which allows for the survival of such emergencies through a swift and efficient medical evacuation process.

Madam Speaker, there are people who want to come to Montserrat for whom money is not a problem, but they simply do not want to die or become disabled through an inefficient stabilisation and medical evacuation process, so it's essential that we get this right. In addition to general surgery, it's intended that the new hospital will have modern design specifications, which will become, for the first time ever on island, a minimally invasive surgery unit, allowing for endoscopic surgery, which is the future of surgery missed by our quite desperate struggle over decades just to create a basic general surgery service. In gynaecology, we will offer a full set of gynaecological procedures, including colposcopy, and the obstetric service, which will be present in the new hospital building, will have modern birthing facilities led by an obstetrician and a team of visiting and virtually available professionals.

Dialysis is also planned for the new hospital, as described earlier. The Ministry of Health is presently securing funds for a one-year program. I must also thank, in addition to our Honourable Premier, Matron Brenda Daley, with her great efforts through the Helping Hands of Glendon and her passion for progress in health care, and in particular presently for dialysis, being very courageous at this point in pushing forward for this dialysis project. So, at Glendon, even though this is planned for the new hospital, we are not waiting for the new hospital to begin the project. We're looking for a continuation of the radiology services, including CT and mammography. As described earlier, the department needs a better compensation package and a better plan for to have adequate staff present. Our professionals at Glendon's radiology department are a very skilled and incredibly vital resource at the top of their game. However, it is essential that in order to retain these persons, that we remunerate them properly and treat them properly so that they do not leave to go to other countries, leaving us stranded and desperate for multiple staff to cover what are presently single roles. Montserrat shows promise for interventional radiology through having, although having only just developed the radiology service to this level, we're not quite there yet. However, in developing our new hospital structure and systems, we must consider procedures for the future, such as coronary artery stenting. Future possibilities subject to the sustainability of the health service, which is directly related to our health financing conversations, and subject to how well the other sectors and ministries do in population retention,

diaspora repatriation, and attracting investors to Montserrat. So, one day in the future, we may be able to be quite advanced based on the services that we already have.

It is intended that in this new hospital, that the critical care services will be expanded in our fit-for-purpose unit with access to ventilatory support, a secure oxygen supply with oxygen being produced on island, dialysis for acute kidney injury and multi-organ dysfunction, and CT for diagnosis. The unit will save lives and will save money for persons or families who are critically ill on island, or will save the government money. Ultimately, the government is responsible for persons who cannot afford local care due to age, disability, or unemployment.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Question 2.

- 2. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether the company contracted to construct the hospital opted to procure materials such as steel, plywood, and 2x4 lumber directly from overseas suppliers, rather than sourcing these materials from local hardware stores?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Construction and Industrial Equipment Limited, one of the RAYOU group of companies, signed the new hospital contract earlier this year and began working immediately. This very experienced and competent company out of St. Lucia has been using a combination of locally available materials and imported items. On the one hand, the company must ensure that local items are used so that local businesses can experience a positive impact. How-

ever, on the other hand, this company also designs and makes many of the items that it uses and has BUILTE its world-renowned success and flawless reputation by creating expertly BUILTE buildings, hospitals, etc. that remain within cost while ensuring excellence in quality. So as the project continues on, we intend to remind the company to include local supplies where possible, but at the end of the day, it is efficiency, it is cost-effectiveness, it's keeping the project within target in terms of the funds that they use that will determine whether or not we have a new hospital project on time, so a combination.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you. (b) of the question, same question.

Further confirm that the company imported heavy equipment from overseas, denying local owners of heavy equipment job opportunities?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The minor works section and work paralleling minor works used local contractors with their equipment. These works were in no way minor, as the term suggests. They have involved a lot of work and have been very expertly done by local contractors to the cost of EC \$10.2 million, and this includes the renovation of the Margetson building to allow for the decanting process that has happened to allow for the destruction and the new build of the hospital. However, construction and industrial equipment, despite the fact that these earlier works were done by local companies. Construction and Industrial Equipment out of St. Lucia won the bid for the new hospital, and a company of this calibre already has a vast amount of equipment and has a level of professionalism that allows them to keep costs within what is expected. So, we know that the company is going

to be bringing in their own equipment. A balance is sought. The company still rents some local equipment in order to contribute to the local economy, such as presently renting some large excavators and dump trucks, and I've been advised that a steel bending company, a local steel bending company, has been employed, which is using local persons.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Question 3.

- 3. Can the Honourable Minister confirm the current rates of pay being offered by the hospital construction company for the following categories of workers? Tradesmen, including carpenters, masons, steel benders and labourers, and provide clarity on whether these rates align with the going rates on Montserrat?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

For the construction of their hospital, a mix of local and imported labourers is being used. Currently, CIE's rates are confidential; however, they have disclosed that their rates are higher than those in some other islands, and they have confirmed that their rates are in line with local regulations. CIE is a privately-owned company, and they have the freedom to negotiate with suppliers for supplies, as well as with labourers. So far, every effort is being made by the Government of Montserrat to cultivate a fair work environment.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, Madam Speaker, one supplementary if it's allowed.

Madam Speaker said:

You may go, you may go.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yeah, speak to higher than some other islands, yes, but then my question referred to Montserrat, and then you your question are referred to are in line with local regulations.

Can you state which local regulations they're referring to?

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

I'll agree, Honourable Lewis, that the answer to this question is incomplete, and if it is necessary, and it probably is, we can probably do a more detailed analysis of local rates and try to get a bit more information from CIE or from the persons employed by CIE in fairness.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you for your honesty in answering the question, Minister. Thank you for answering all the previous questions. I do have a question, however, for the Minister of Education, which I believe is the same Minister.

4. Can the Honourable Minister explain what new training facilities and diagnostic tools are being put in place to address gaps identified where there has been a failure to adequately support special needs education?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Lewis for this question, which highlights the new dawn of awareness and focus on Montserrat for special educational needs students. As you know,

special educational needs students span a range from persons with profound and obvious deficits to persons who function normally and perform well but have deficits in developing understanding or know-how in an area using traditional methods of teaching. This attention and focus can turn B's and C's into A's and B's. Special educational needs programs backed by policy and law have been developed in the UK since prior to the 1990s, and we are presently on Montserrat embarking on a program to correct decades of deficiencies and to increase SEN support. Not only do we have increased awareness to commitment of the need within the Ministry and new roles advertised in this area, but it has also come to my attention that very many of our teachers and teaching assistants, having themselves identified the problem early on in their careers, have already undertaken formal and informal training in special educational needs. We are in the process of creating a special educational needs register for island population and for our diaspora. We want to know how we can assist our people in helping each other, and by looking at the local skill set and fashioning work around what we have, I think that would be a useful approach.

We are presently advertising for a special educational needs coordinator, a speech and language therapist, an educational psychologist, teaching assistants and personal assistants. We expect that our students on Montserrat who have any degree of special educational needs will have education and care plans and all of the support that they need to ensure that their deficits are identified and they're supported in the necessary areas so that they are better able to learn. And in addition to what our amazing teachers are doing on their own, our Honourable Premier this summer arranged for a team of four to visit Montserrat for two weeks, and this team provided support to teachers, parents and students in special educational needs. These professionals trained in the US in special educational needs brought with them \$8,000 worth of materials to be used by our local teachers and our local teaching assistants for special educational needs support. In addition to this, the Ministry, as part of its professional development program, has engaged teachers from pre-primary to secondary level to expose them to strategies that can be used in general classrooms to provide educational support for special educational needs students. It is ideal that most students be integrated into mainstream school; how-

ever, the need for an actual special educational needs base has been recognised.

In terms of training facilities, it is hoped but not yet arranged that the Montserrat Community College in the near future will embrace a technical and vocational side which will include teaching teachers and teaching assistants in special educational needs. Although we already have roles advertised for special educational needs, Montserrat is awaiting the project manager in education for education transformation in order to officially launch this special educational needs and disability and other projects in education. So, we're creating a framework on which we can steadily build and be more progressive in this area that we have been deficient in for some time.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Second question to the Minister of Education.

5. Having highlighted the recurring issue of our skill gap, what steps is the government taking to implement technical and vocational subjects into the school's curriculum from primary to college level, and will there be partnerships with stakeholders in the private sector to ensure real-world experience and relevance?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would also like to thank Honourable Lewis for his very, very relevant question. In responding to the problem of inadequate technical subjects being taught in the schools, which results in an under-skilled school-leaving population, we in the Ministry of Education recognise that it's a huge challenge both for the workforce in getting these persons integrated but also in getting them transferred to tertiary education to study tertiary technical subjects at

a higher level. This is an urgent policy priority for the new Ministry of Education with an urgent plan of action to increase technical subjects at primary and secondary education through a properly managed project. The project will run with programs including mechanics, carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, hospitality and customer service. Regardless, sorry regarding partnerships with private stakeholders, it is the intention of the Ministry to ensure that our local stakeholders are sufficiently engaged to ensure that the incredible students that we produce are definitely fit for the local market. The summer program presently being put on in collaboration with other departments of government did involve a technical side where we intended that our students were going to be involved on construction sites, plumbing sites and other sort of technical sites where they can gain experience and make decisions on whether or not they have a passion for a particular technical subject.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank the Minister for answering the questions. I have no further questions. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to present my questions.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you, Honourable Member. Recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

Questions to the Honourable Premier from Honourable Nyota Mulcare, Member of the Opposition.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My first set of questions will go to the Honourable Premier and Leader of Government Business. My first question.

- 1. The general public continues to experience extensive delays, sometimes exceeding a year, in the processing of applications for***

naturalization. As a result of these delays, supporting documents initially submitted with applications often expire or become out-dated. Applicants are then required to resubmit updated documents, some of which incur additional costs. Furthermore, they have been asked by the Office of the Deputy Governor to repay processing fees upon resubmission. In light of the additional and undue financial burden being placed on applicants through no fault of their own, can the Honourable Leader of Government Business please inform this Honourable House, (a) whether the government intends to review and revise the naturalization process to make it more timely and efficient, and (b) given that the delays originate within the Office of the Deputy Governor, what steps will be taken to waive or refund resubmission fees for affected applicants??

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as we would recognise, I'm reading a response from the Deputy Governor's Office which is responsible for this. This is not part of my ministerial portfolio. This response also underscores the importance of transparency, efficiency, and fairness in the administration of citizenship matters in Montserrat, which I seek to clarify at this point.

Let me begin by assuring this Honourable House that the government remains committed to the timely and effective processing of all applications for naturalization. We acknowledge that any delay can be frustrating for applicants. However, it is important to clarify that there are no resubmission fees associated with the naturalization process. The prescribed application fee is EC \$1,550, which is paid upon initial submission. As part of the due diligence undertaken by the Office of the Deputy Governor, the process involves engagement with several local agencies to determine whether applicants have any outstanding obligations or debts. If such obligations are identified, the application cannot advance until the debt or other obligations have been resolved. In many instances, it is the time taken to prepare these outstanding

matters that contributes to the delays, not the administrative process itself.

While there may be occasional delays due to the thorough and necessary vetting required, it is not often the norm for processing timelines to exceed one year. In the rare circumstances where this has occurred, the Office of the Deputy Governor has made every effort to communicate with affected applicants and provide reasonable support. Again, I wish to reiterate that at no point is a resubmission fee applied in such cases. Applicants are sometimes required to support documents, but this is the only where necessary to comply with legal or procedural arrangements and requirements. For clarity, in the case of permanent residence applications, not naturalization, an updated tax compliance certificate may be requested if the previous one has expired. The statutory stamp fee for reissuing this document is \$20, which is a standard administrative cost unrelated to naturalization. These measures ensure that decisions are based on current and accurate information in line with best practices and the high standards expected of a process that confers the privilege of citizenship. The government takes seriously its responsibility to administer the naturalization process with fairness and integrity. We remain committed to protecting the rights of applicants while ensuring that all legal requirements are upheld.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My second question to the Honourable Premier.

- 2. During the period 18th to 24th July 2025, there was a shortage of airline seats to and from Montserrat. Can the Honourable Premier and Minister for Access please inform this Honourable House what contingency measures are in place to address such bottlenecks, especially during peak periods and in cases of emergency travel?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister for Access.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, this period saw a higher-than-usual demand for travel as Montserrat hosted the Soufriere Hills Volcano Conference, SHV30, which attracted interest and attendees from the region and across the world. Additionally, we started to immediately realize the direct benefits of a price cap policy, which was intended to increase travel and visitors to the island through more affordable ticketing options. The limited number of available seats was exacerbated by operational challenges experienced by one of the carriers, making it particularly difficult for last-minute travellers to secure additional seats during this period. It is primarily the responsibility of the airline operators to implement contingencies for business continuity. In other words, carriers are able to put on additional or extra flights outside of their routine schedule based on demand. Nevertheless, the Government of Montserrat continues to work diligently to enhance our air access. We remain on track to introduce additional twin-otter flights for the peak periods in December 2025 and March 2026. That's using the Winair option. Furthermore, the SVG MBNA twin otter services are expected to commence, hopefully, by September of 2025. For private emergency travel where seats are unavailable, chartering a flight remains an option. In cases of medical emergencies posing a risk to life, the Ministry of Health will intervene to provide support.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for BUILTE from the Honourable Nyota Mulcare, Member of the Opposition

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also say thank you to the Honourable Premier for responding to my questions accordingly. I now move on to the Minister of Infrastructure, Labour, Transport, Energy and Ecclesiastic Affairs. My first question.

- 1. Given the continued rapid rise in the cost of living on Montserrat, can the Honourable Minister of Labour update this Honourable House on the initiatives undertaken thus far to aid the implementation of the minimum wage for Montserrat?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I was on the doctor's permission to be at home for the past seven days due to a leg injury.

That was not because of dancing, Madam Speaker. As a result, Madam Speaker, I was communicating with my office through electronic means. These questions did not reach my eyes. I did not see them, Madam Speaker, and hence I spoke to the Honourable Member this morning, indicating I have not seen them. I have seen now, Madam Speaker, where my clerk brought to me response to both questions that the Ministry requires additional time to respond to this. And so, Madam Speaker, rather than speaking off the top of my head, we do it as it is required in the proper form, and therefore I'm asking your indulgence in this as well as the Honourable Member of the Opposition to address this in the proper format that we usually do. The first time I've seen them is when I got here to this table this morning.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Mulcare are you satisfied with that?

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, given the urgency of the cost-of-living crisis currently affecting workers across Montserrat, can the Honourable Minister indicate by when this Honourable House can expect a comprehensive update on the initiatives related to implementing the minimum wage and to commit to a specific timeline advancing this critical policy measure? So, in other words, can we expect them by the next sitting of the House?

Madam Speaker said:

I'm sure that would be more than adequate time. That would be in September. But, Honourable Member, Minister, give us...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Member. Madam Speaker, in my report to this Honourable House this morning, I indicated that the minimum wage that we promised that the Ministry have sent out the Cabinet paper, has received feedback, and we are now preparing that paper to go to Cabinet. So, once it reaches Cabinet, we should be able to bring something to this House. I indicated that, and I will seek to endeavour that that happens.

Madam Speaker said:

Are you satisfied with that, Honourable?

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member did indicate she didn't have a response, but she gave some responses to the question. So, I look forward to that update.

Madam Speaker said:

At the next meeting of the House.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. What is your Point of Order?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, we need to clarify the record and not mislead this House or the general public. I indicated to you, Madam Speaker, respectfully, I was incapacitated due to an injury to my leg, so I was at

home. I was communicating with my staff through electronic means. I have not, I did not see these questions, Madam Speaker, as soon as I heard that, because I asked. As soon as I heard, I came this morning, I spoke to the Honourable Member and indicated what had happened. In my preparation, Madam Speaker, I addressed the issue when I gave my ministerial report to this Honourable House. In that House, I indicate that this government is committed, Madam Speaker, to the minimum wage. I also indicated that we are now preparing that to move to Cabinet. Given that, she has asked, Madam Speaker, and I can, no, I will not go there. Madam Speaker, I said I am committed to advancing this paper to the House. The paper went out, got comments from the relevant parties, and we're now collating that to move it to Cabinet and then to this House. So, it is wrong, Madam Speaker, to say I did not have an answer. I saw this, my Ministry was the one that provided this, not me. It reads the Ministry requires additional time to respond to this question, not the minister. I did not see it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

May I ask that the responses to the questions, since the Ministry needs additional time, that the responses be prepared and circulated to the Legislative Assembly and we will, to the Legislature Department, and we will get them out to you.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I'm not sure where in my response the Minister misunderstood. Because all I said, I look forward to the update as she indicated.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay. I said, I will ask the Ministry to get them to the Legislature Department, so you can have them and other members as well. Okay, Honourable Minister.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

For clarification, Madam Speaker, in the responses that would be provided later, how do we proceed? Would they be able to be read out in the House? I need some clarification on how do we proceed on that.

Madam Speaker said:

Well, they could be read in the House at the next sitting.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Minister, you wanted to...

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

And that's why I asked, because we know we had problems with my original question, which the Premier responded to, in terms of it's a new Parliament, and then it would be seen as if I'm repeating a question.

Madam Speaker said:

Right. So, let me put it to the other Members of the House. Could you take a seat, please? Honourable Minister of BUILTE, you have an intervention?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

I do, Madam Speaker. Thank you so kindly. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member said that I said I didn't have an answer, but I gave one. I indicated the Ministry brought this to the House because I was off sick. I did not see it. But I referred the Honourable Member to my ministerial statement this morning, where I dealt with that issue, and so I am able to address it. The other answer, Madam Speaker, I will not hazard to do that, because we have a format that we use in this House, and we're seeking to comply with that format. Hence, I spoke to the Honourable Member this morning, and I said I want it very clear on the record, and that this Honourable House and the public are not misled that the Minister has answers and is withholding or pretending not to. At least, that is how I feel about it. So, I want it clarified that the Ministry said that, and having given that information, I felt I could share that with the Honourable Member, referring back. I

would not have said that had the question not arisen. I just want that to be clarified, Madam Speaker, not to prolong this debate.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, so Honourable Member, Honourable Mulcare, you understand the clarification that the Minister is providing?

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it seems as if there's a bit touching issues this morning, and the Minister has gone. I'm not even going.

Madam Speaker said:

Right, and let us not go there.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

We're moving on. I indicated that I would want to hear a response later on, and that's all I'm seeking. I just wanted to be clear that when I resubmit my questions to you, that there would not be any objection.

Madam Speaker said:

Fine, let me hear what the Honourable Premier is saying. Your mic, please.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I really should not, but just for clarification, the information will, in fact, be provided to you.

Madam Speaker said:

But she was asking the question whether it would come back to the House. So, I wanted to ask the Members if they'd be willing, because September would be a new parliamentary year, if we would be happy to accept them then.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, sorry again. The Minister, in her ministerial statement, will bring that back to the House as an update at the next sitting.

Madam Speaker said:

Through a ministerial statement?

The Honourable Premier said:

It's, Madam Speaker, the question is, are we seeking information or are we seeking to do otherwise? So, whether it comes as a question or response to a question or ministerial statement, the important thing is that the information is being provided to this Honourable House.

Madam Speaker said:

I understand that. Just a minute, Honourable Leader. I understand that. But the Honourable Mulcare posed some questions and she, I think she has a right to determine how she would like to get the responses. Okay, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, sorry, Madam Speaker. I was saying that you were about to or started to pose a question to the Members of the House as to whether or not it would be allowed to come back in the form of answers from the Minister in the next sitting and there will be no issues about the fact that it is a new Parliament year. So, I was hoping that we would have a chance to answer and the Minister herself would get a chance to, if she's prepared to. So, as a House, we could decide whether or not we accept that.

Madam Speaker said:

I was about to do that, yes. So, let me pose the question to the House. This matter...

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order. Madam Speaker, when I refer to the rules of this Honourable House, your question as to whether or not we're willing to do something in the next sitting is beyond what the

rules provide for. It is for us to provide information to the House and the Minister has given an indication that it will be provided in a Parliamentary Statement. So, it will be in response to the question that has been raised.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, and I did ask that question if it would be in a Ministerial Statement, but I did not get that response. So, is the Minister agreeing to that now? Minister of BUILTE?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Can the Minister of BUILTE provide a response as to how she would present the information, please?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Probably a solution would be in accordance with what the Honourable Premier himself said. He said the rules don't allow you to continue, whether it's a Ministerial Statement or a question. So, why not just let them come back with the question next session and allow the Minister to provide the answer next session? And in the meantime, perhaps she could circulate the answer to us, you know, for now, unless she changes her mind.

Madam Speaker said:

Well, if the questions are going to come back, then the responses can wait until then.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Exactly. So, she said the next session in the form of questions.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, the reason for that is I want to be fair to the Honourable Member or any member of the team. If it simply comes in a statement, where's the opportunity for rebuttal if one is there? Okay, supplementary, sorry, supplementary. I want to be fair. Okay, so I'm saying, yes, I would bring information once I have it, but that mode that the Honourable Member chose to ask her question, I would wish to respect that in the event she wants to ask a supplementary. I think that's the fair thing to do. So, it will come next session.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, so let me make that ruling then, that the questions would come in September in the new session, and the answers would be provided.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for Education, Health and Social Services from Honourable Nyota Mulcare

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for finally wrapping up that session. So, I move on to the Honourable Minister of Education, Health and Social Services.

- 1. Can the Honourable Minister of Education inform this Honourable House whether the Ministry of Education has conducted any recent review of its organizational structure to support career advancement and retain education professionals? If not, will the Honourable Minister commit to making this a priority going forward?***

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Education is presently assessing all aspects of education. In regards to education administration, the team is working hard together on the strategic educational plan, which is now five years overdue. And the Ministry is ensuring that there's adequate input from education officials for the plan. But we must press on as time is of the essence. In special educational needs, we welcome the new organizational structure with the employment of the special educational needs coordinator, as explained earlier. And this person will ensure an up-to-date special educational needs program, ensuring that our students who have deficits receive the support they require. The program will also ensure that students have the support they require for tertiary education.

Regarding supporting career advancement and retention of educational professionals, the Ministry is presently working on an audit of the local skill set. Many persons have trained independently in relevant areas, and it would be to Montserrat's benefit to use the brilliance and the talent that we already have on island. The teacher retention program, which we are presently developing, will include free health care for teachers at Glendon. We are presently awaiting a paper from the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Will include plans around presentable and affording housing options for teachers. Will include ensuring direct access to classroom suppliers, which are presently a huge problem for many teachers. And will ensure that there's additional support with continued professional education, and then clear, decisive decisions on the curriculum that teachers are following, presently a cause of extreme distress. The new to education is the Friday Zoom Day, where persons on island and in the diaspora are very welcome to engage in open discussions via Zoom. On an island of 4,300 persons, we are limited. As an electronic nation, we are boundless. So, I welcome additional dialogue on Fridays, not only just with Open Day, but with Zooms, with persons from the Montserrat diaspora and other persons who are interested in the development of education on Montserrat.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I say thank you to the Honourable Minister of Education for that comprehensive response. My second question,

2. Can the Honourable Minister of Health inform this Honourable House whether the Ministry of Health has conducted any recent review of its organizational structure to support career development and advancement and to retain health professionals? If not, will the Honourable Minister commit to making this a priority going forward?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. In emailing, I did not submit a comprehensive response, but since then, I've seen and emailed a response from Health Transformation. Just your decision and the decision of the Opposition Member as to whether or not they want me to read the detailed response, which was only submitted over the last hour, or leave it for another time, as it was not submitted prior to the last hour.

Madam Speaker said:

Did you share the response with the Honourable Member?

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

With you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

With me, but I don't have access to it, so I have not seen it.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Okay, so it's fairly basic. So, should I leave it for another time, or would Honourable Mulcare like to hear it?

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Mulcare, are you happy to...

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Madam Speaker, thank you. I would prefer that the response be shared, so I'll be able to prepare a supplementary if I so desire. I don't have access to it. I haven't seen it. So then and therefore, my request would be if it can also be... that I'd also be allowed to resubmit my question, and it comes in the next sitting.

Madam Speaker said:

I so rule.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you.

The Honourable Minister said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

We'll bring it to the next session.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. That will be all for me.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

Questions to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Land, Housing and the Environment, Youth Affairs & Sports from Honourable Donaldson Romeo

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you. My first question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs and Sports.

1. Can the Honourable Minister of Lands tell us what is the size and value of the plot of land that was allocated and handed over for the construction of the children's playground in Little Bay?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Lands.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the parcel of land allocated and handed over for the construction of the children's playground in Little Bay measures approximately 0.36 acres. At this time, the monetary value of the land has not yet been formally determined. A proper valuation would need to be conducted by the Inland Revenue Department, which is the authority responsible for land valuations on Montserrat. Once such a valuation is carried out, Madam Speaker, the government will be in a better position to state the estimated value of the property.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Supplemental. I hope you'll be able to answer the supplemental.

Which being the Minister responsible for planning, in handing over this land that is approximately 0.36 acres, are we to assume that all planning approvals were gained for the project?

Madam Speaker said:

I didn't get your question.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

In handing over 0.3 acres of land to a project, as the Minister responsible for planning, I'm wondering whether we are to assume that planning approval was given for the project?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, while I realise it's a substantive question, I think it's for me to actually notify the House that the piece of land in question was actually handed over in 2023 by a Cabinet paper that was dated on July 10th. So, while the Honourable Member may allude to the fact that he thinks that it was handed over during my time, it was actually done during a decision in 2023, which I cannot be held responsible for, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of clarity. Madam, I'm not accusing him of anything. He is continuing to be in government. I think my question is fair. I want to know if the planning approval was given. It doesn't matter who's in office or when it was done. It was a Cabinet paper. Was it approved by planning? If you can't answer, that's fine. I understand.

Madam Speaker said:

Well, he just said that he can't because he...

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

As I said, Madam Speaker, it's a substantive question. What I said was just as a point of clarity for the Honourable Member so that he knew.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, because I do realize that he was introducing something new.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Right. So, I just wanted to give him a background as to when that decision would have been made, so at least he understands. So, I wasn't actually directly answering your question, but just to give you some clarity on when that land would have been handed over.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yeah, I admit it's a bit different and I guess he will give an answer during the week.

Madam Speaker said:

Well, I suppose if you know it's a bit different, you shouldn't do it.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Well, Madam Speaker, thank you.

2. A deadline of 31st December, 2030, was previously set by the Government of Montserrat for claiming unregistered lands. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House, (a), exactly what the consequences are for failing to meet this deadline, and (b), what steps are being taken to notify landowners of this deadline and of the consequences of failing to register lands?

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of Lands.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Crown Title Amendment Act of 2020, and let me just state 2020, extended the deadline to the 31st of December, 2030. The previous deadline of 2020, for persons to submit claims to the Registrar of Lands for lands that have remained unclaimed after the coming into force of the Registered Land Act. All lands in Montserrat are registered to private individuals, the Crown, or are shown as unclaimed on the Register. Madam Speaker, the CTA or the Crown Title Amendment Act provides that any person who claims any right or any interest in land, which has not already been claimed by that person under the Land Adjudication Act, shall, if he does not claim his right or interest in that land by 31st December, 2030, forfeit such right and the land shall vest in the Crown, absolutely.

Madam Speaker, to answer Part B of that question, the Ministry has issued a notice, and the notice is dated 11th of June, 2025, to the public, notifying them of the statutory deadline and inviting persons to submit claims to the Registrar of Lands. The notice is published on the Ministry's website and currently runs on ZJB Community Diary Weekly. It is proposed that the officers of the Ministry, Madam Speaker, will be on ZJB within the coming months, advising persons of the deadline and the process for making these claims. And I must say, Madam Speaker, that since we have put out the notice, several persons have come into the Ministry to seek guidance in claiming some lands.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplemental, please. And thank you to the Honourable Minister for doing that job of informing the public. I just have to ask one simple question.

Does this notice apply for people who own lands in the danger areas as well, Plymouth and the other areas in the exclusion zone?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Lands.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, I can't answer that question directly, because as I know, currently, we're not dealing with lands that are in the exclusion zone. But I did come into the Ministry and I saw the Land Act. And I was wondering, well, why hasn't it been announced that this is going to happen in 2030? So, I felt that it was fair to announce it to the public. And the outcome of that is not necessarily to take back lands from persons, but that's so that persons are aware that there are lands that are unclaimed and that they can look into it and actually claim their lands, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yes, Madam Speaker, my next question.

- 3. Could the Honourable Minister of Lands tell this Honourable House what arrangements are in place for the sale or leasing of lands owned by the Government of Montserrat in the Little Bay area?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on the 9th of April, 2025, Cabinet endorsed a robust approach to the regularization of occupation of Crown lands in Little Bay and Carrs Bay and approved the Ministry's policy of granting three-year leases to current occupiers of Crown lands. On April 9th, 2025, Cabinet approved leasehold arrangement for four such occupiers. On the 6th of June, the Ministry received valuation reports for further four occupants and the Ministry is in the process of drafting the lease for these properties, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

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

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. My next question is for the Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. *In answer to questions previously asked in this Honourable House, you gave a general explanation of what can happen if someone is critically ill at night and cannot be medevaced until the morning. Could the Honourable Minister of Health be more specific as to what the capability of our hospital is in dealing with a patient experiencing a stroke at night, and what the protocol is for dealing with a patient of that nature while waiting to be medevaced the next day, the consequences of waiting, and what is the preferred protocol which she intends to have in place with urgency and also by the time the new hospital is BUILTE?*

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of Health said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank Honourable Romeo for his extremely relevant question, the answers to which could affect all of us in this room, all of the Montserratians listening on Montserrat, all of those in the diaspora who intend to one day visit Montserrat, and all investors who want to come to Montserrat. So presently, survival on Montserrat in life-threatening, time-critical emergencies is still dependent on when you present to the hospital, as flying after 6 pm and 6 am is still not officially permitted. A study on night flying is recently being undertaken, and I know a lot is happening in the Ministry of BUILTE to make sure that we reach the point at which we can send patients out at night officially. In the meantime, all that can be done to ensure that persons with time-critical emergencies are sent to the correct place and at the right time all is being done.

A Memorandum of Understanding is ready to be signed between Montserrat and Guadeloupe, and a paper that has to reach Cabinet is on its way there. Guadeloupe is the closest and most capable facility at 20 minutes away, and a flight that is a fraction of the cost of medical evacuation flights to islands further away. Our relationship with Guadeloupe requires a retainer on the part of the Government of Montserrat but this ensures that when our doctor at the emergency department makes the diagnosis of stroke at 2 am, has his scan report, has his ECG, has his medical summary, has his lab results, that he can contact Guadeloupe electronically and by phone and be instructed on the pathway for care of the patient until the patient arrives in Guadeloupe. Thus, if this happens at 2 am, by 6 am, our emergency physician will have made the correct diagnosis and will have administered the correct medication according to guidelines. I noted earlier this year that alteplase for thrombolysis in ischemic stroke has been available on Montserrat since February for the first time. We're extremely grateful for this.

So, potentially a lot can be done to make sure that when 6:00 a.m. does come that our patient can immediately leave. It is really important that we get this right. There have been failed medical evacuations over the past eight months and delayed medical evacuations and it is extremely, extremely important that we get this aspect of care perfectly right all the time. The Ministry of Health is committed to following up on night flying and is happy to bring more information to this Honourable House. It would only take one extraction of a very important person for medical reasons by night to raise eyebrows about disparity in medical evacuation. So, let us get it right for all persons living on island regardless of socioeconomic status.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

A supplemental Madam Speaker. The conclusion of her answer begs me to ask because the. Because the Honourable Speaker of the House, House of Commons was here on island. We live on island. Every Member here.

Madam Speaker said:

Your question please.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. I have to give my preamble. The Governor lives on island Madam Speaker. I am therefore asking whether this Honourable House will support a request to see that the British Government acts swiftly to provide a ferry that would provide medevacs and also to move swiftly to get air access with urgency just as they spent £300 million....

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Member, you've gone on to something different. You've gone on to something completely different.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam, no. She said that the Ministry is committed to following up on night flying. And I thank Mr. Romeo for bringing this vitally important topic to the House. Then she said it would only take an extraction of one important person by night. That's a serious statement. So, I'm asking,

Is the Minister willing to support a request, a resolution from this House, a request, a public request, to get a ferry in place with urgency and air access with night flying available?

Madam Speaker said:

And I am not going to allow that supplementary. Do you want to move on to your next question, please?

Questions to the Honourable Premier from Honourable Donaldson Romeo

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister, you understand. I have to be very firm. My next question is for the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance.

- 1. Serious concerns have been raised by pilots, a local airport airline manager and others about the likely consequences in the event that one of our Islander aircrafts loses one engine on take-off from the John A. Osborne Airport. These safety-related concerns were shared with the Honourable Members of the Honourable House. This House, last year and this year. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House what emergency response measures are in place should an Islander aircraft lose one of its engines on take-off from our John A. Osborne Airport?***

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, an emergency response plan for aircraft incidents, including Islander aircraft losing an engine on take-off from the John Osborne Airport, has always been in place. This plan predates my tenure, but still remains active. The aerodrome operates under Air Safety Support International's ASSI safety regulations and safety requirements, and its continued operation is contingent upon maintaining these emergency response levels for all types of aircraft operations at the airport.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplemental, please. With all due respect, the question asks what emergency response measures are in place. His answer says they've always been in place, and it predates the Honourable Member's tenure, and remains active, my tenure. He does not tell us what measures are in place.

Honourable Premier, could you kindly tell us what measures are in place?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

An emergency response plan for aircraft incidents, including Islander aircraft losing an engine on take-off from the John Osborne Airport, has always been in place. The aerodrome operates under ASSI safety regulations, safety requirements, and its continued operation is contingent upon maintaining these emergency response levels for all types of aircraft operations at the airport. Madam Speaker, I may go further in responding to the Honourable Gentleman. I could have simply said airport operations do not fall under the remit of the Premier, but I sought diligently to provide the information, and secondly, I don't have information in terms of the details of that emergency response.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, who do I ask for this? Doesn't the Honourable Premier want to have the details? I'll move on to my next question.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order.

Madam Speaker said:

Let us hear your Point of Order, please.

The Honourable Premier said:

If he wishes to get involved in a debate, let him say so. If he has a supplementary, let him ask a supplementary, but don't try no innuendo in responding, because I, for the first time, provided the responses

signed and in writing, so you have them. Okay, so don't try no innuendo.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, so let us not start a debate now. Let us move on to the next question, please.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Aye, aye, aye. I will try, Madam Speaker. I will try. A simple question. I'll continue.

Can the Honourable Minister tell his Honourable House whether the UK and international regulations are being followed with regard to having a single-engine helicopter transport...

Madam Speaker said:

Just a minute, please. Which question is that? No, I'm trying to find the question, sorry. Who was that question for? That question was probably misdirected, you know. You're willing to answer? Do you have the answer for it? I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2. Can the Honourable Minister tell his Honourable House, the Minister for Access, whether the UK and international regulations are being followed with regard to having a single-engine helicopter transport commercial flights carrying members of the public, including flights contracted by the Government of Montserrat?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister for Access.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, whilst I'm the Minister with responsibility for access, there are certain elements as it relates to the airport and airport operations which do not fall under my remit. But I have been diligent in seeking to provide responses. Regarding the question of whether UK and international regulations are being followed for single-engine helicopter commercial flights, including those contracted by the Government of Montserrat, my unequivocal answer is yes. Helicopters operating in Montserrat must meet all required standards to transport passengers; otherwise, they are not permitted to fly. Our aerodrome management and regulators ensure strict adherence to these standards. And Madam Speaker, I will go further. This is not only for helicopters. It includes all aircraft coming into Montserrat.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My supplemental, please.

Honourable Premier and Minister of Access, then can you tell us whether a one-engine helicopter is, in fact, allowed by UK regulations to bring commercial passengers to Montserrat?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Access.

The Honourable Premier said:

Regarding the question of whether UK and international regulations are being followed for single-engine helicopter commercial flights, including those contracted by the Government of Montserrat, the answer is yes. Helicopters operating in Montserrat must meet all required standards to transport passengers; otherwise, they are not permitted to fly. Our aerodrome management and regulators ensure strict adherence to these standards. I don't understand what he does not understand with that simple response.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, he said he does not understand, so for clarity. Because he said he doesn't understand. Now, he has said that...

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order.

Madam Speaker said:

Just a minute, let me hear your Point of Order.

The Honourable Premier said:

On a Point of Order, a supplementary deal with points of elucidation.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, I understand that.

The Honourable Premier said:

So, whether or not I understand has nothing to do with whether he understands.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, let me hear what he was saying.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, he said helicopters operating in Montserrat must meet all required standards. He did not say that helicopters are presently being allowed to bring passengers. Because they could be required to meet the standards. And the standards say they shouldn't, and they don't bring anybody. The only passenger allowed...

Madam Speaker said:

But he answered with regard to the regulations.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I know, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Premier said:

Our aerodrome management and regulators ensure strict adherence to the standards....

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Are you allowed to just stand up and speak?

Madam Speaker said:

Just a minute....

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Are you allowed to just stand up and speak?

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable, Honourable, let's have some order, please. Honourable members, let's have some order please.

The Honourable Premier said:

Helicopters operating in Montserrat must meet. Otherwise, they're not permitted to fly. What is it that he does not understand there?

Madam Speaker said:

So, let's, so that...., it's for him to say. Honourable.....

The Honourable Premier said:

And our aerodrome management and regulators ensure strict adherence to these standards. What is it that he does not understand?

Madam Speaker said:

So, I've heard you. Let me hear him now.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

It's not what I don't understand. It's what the Honourable Premier doesn't understand I'm responding to. He said he does not understand....

Madam Speaker said:

No Honourable...

The Honourable Premier said:

...Madam Speaker, it's for him, not for me.

Madam Speaker said:

Should we take some water?

[Cross Talk]

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker.....

Madam Speaker said:

Please take your mic off, and I'm standing. This is not getting us very far. We need to adhere to the rules of the House. And the questions says that your supplementary should be based on the facts in the response and whether or not you understand what it says. So, you should not be introducing anything new. He said that the aerodrome management and regulators ensure that strict adherence to the standards is followed. So, what are you asking, Honourable Romeo? And let us keep this orderly, please.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, I thought I was asking a simple thing. Sure, the helicopters must meet standards, and the aerodrome operators are strict. My question is then, since they're strict, are helicopters allowed presently? It's a different question. And if he can't answer it, Madam

Speaker, I don't want to get into the shouting. When he can't answer, he just shouts. So, let me move on to the next question.

Madam Speaker said:

Right, thank you very much. Because you just said it's a different question. So, you're breaching the rules.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

So no,

Madam Speaker said:

You said it. Let us not argue. Move on to your next question, please.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Okay, Madam Speaker. I'll leave it. We'll deal with it in another forum.

3. Madam Speaker, the UK Government has always stated that the new Little Bay Port was being BUILTE to accommodate the safe docking of the ferry, among other vessels. Can the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Access tell this Honourable House whether from his negotiations or discussions with the FCDO, the UK Government is still committed to providing ferry for transporting passengers and cargo to and from Antigua?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I can assure this Honourable House that all options for ensuring reliable access to Montserrat, including the provision of a ferry service, remain on the table. Therefore, in direct response to the Honourable Minister's question, the answer is again an unequivocally yes. The British Government remains committed to supporting ferry services and cargo transport to and from Montserrat. Now that we have practically completed the work on the air transport element,

we are currently in the process of preparing invitations to tender for ferry services.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplemental, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Next question.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Supplementary, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Next question.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Okay. Alright. Okay. Okay.

Prisoners on Montserrat who cannot afford a lawyer find themselves being prosecuted by government-employed prosecutors in Her Majesty's Court. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House whether prisoners on Her Majesty's Prison on British Overseas Territory of Montserrat... Sorry, sorry, sorry. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House whether prisoners on His Majesty's Prison on the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat... Sorry, there's an error here.

Madam Speaker said:

Could you take your time and go over the question, please?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Oh yes, yes, I got it now. Sorry. Sorry, Madam Speaker. Something was covering the next part of the script. Let me read again.

4. Prisoners on Montserrat who cannot afford a lawyer can find themselves being prosecuted by government-employed prosecutors in Her Majesty's Court, Montserrat. Can the Honourable Minister tell this Honourable House whether prisoners in His Majesty's Prison on the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat (a) are eligible for legal aid; (b) have been provided legal aid in the past five years? And (c) have been provided legal aid in the past ten years.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, there is currently no formal legal aid structure in Montserrat and no statutory framework for such. However, assistance with legal representation through a member of the local Bar may be provided to persons who are charged with serious offences, such as murder. Assistance may also be provided to other accused due to special and extenuating circumstances and vulnerabilities of the accused in a given matter. Legal aid is not generally provided for appeal matters. Where a person applies for legal aid, a means test is conducted to determine the means of the applicant and whether or not he or she qualifies for assistance. The means test is conducted by the Social Services Department and includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of the applicant's financial position and whether he or she has the financial means to secure legal representation. Once the relevant assessment has been completed, the applicant is advised as to whether he or she may receive legal aid and the basis for the determination. In relation to (b), from 2020 to 2025, as at today's date, legal aid was provided to five members. From 2015 to 2025, legal aid was provided in seven matters, two matters in 2017. Madam Speaker, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you too. I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplemental, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Let me hear.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I am informed that there is a prisoner in the prison who does have legal aid, in that there's an exception to the rule for one prisoner in the prison. Is the Honourable Premier aware of that?

Madam Speaker said:

Isn't that introducing something different from the answer he has provided? I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, his answer said there's currently no formal legal aid structure in Montserrat. My question is, is he aware that there's one prisoner that has a structure in place for them to have legal aid?

Madam Speaker said:

The prisoner has a structure in place?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

That there's a structure in place that provides legal aid for a prisoner in our prison.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Romeo, I don't understand where you're going with this. Because he said, however, assistance with legal representation through a member of the local bar may be provided to persons who are charged with serious offences such as murder. So there, something is done, although it's not a formal structure.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, I'm asking about a statement he made. There's currently no formal legal aid structure. Whatever the however is, he said there's no formal legal aid structure. And I'm asking, is he aware that there is a structure in place for one prisoner?

Madam Speaker said:

I will allow the Premier to answer the question, but there will be no further discussions on it.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I am unaware. But if the Honourable Member has information which he wishes to share with me, we can have that discussion outside. And I can then follow up in terms of educating myself as to what has happened there.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Honourable Premier, for that very good answer.

5. A prisoner from the Chagos Islands described as a Tamale migrant seeking asylum was transferred to Montserrat to serve his sentence at His Majesty's Prison in Brades. Sorry, Madam Speaker, this whole thing is just making me laugh and still, I don't know how to put it. Let me ask the question again. A prisoner from the Chagos Islands described as a Tamale migrant seeking asylum was transferred to Montserrat to serve his sentence at His Majesty's Prison in Brades. Can you tell us, Honourable House, how many prison officers, teachers, or other staff have been brought to Montserrat specifically to support this one prisoner?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, given that the arrangements as it relates to the said prisoner is an arrangement between the Government of Montserrat and the Foreign Office, the Foreign Office has indicated that the details of this arrangement must remain restricted. However, I can acknowledge that the required resources have been provided and are fully funded by the UK Government through the FCDO. It's their prisoner.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next question.

- 6. After receiving evidence and testimonies from MVO scientists, the police, journalists, members of the private and public sectors, Governor Savage, and more, regarding the death of 18 persons on June 25, 1997, the British magistrate or coroner and jury concluded that the death of a mother, a three-month-old daughter, and two airport workers was caused by the natural catastrophe of volcanic eruption, pyroclastic surge, and that a contributory cause of death was the continued operation of the airport despite the elevated volcanic activity in the days immediately preceding June 25, 1997. I want to ask the question one more time. After receiving evidence and testimonies from the MVO scientists, the police, journalists, members of the private and public sectors, Governor Savage, and more, regarding the death of 18 persons on June 25, 1997, the British magistrate or coroner and jury concluded that the death of a mother, three-month-old daughter, and two airport workers was caused by the natural catastrophe of volcanic eruption, pyroclastic surge, and that a contributory cause of death was the continued operation of the airport despite the elevated volcanic activity in the days immediately preceding June 25, 1997. Can the Honourable Premier tell this Honourable House what the key lessons are which his government learned from the failure of those in authority to heed the warnings of the scientists, of the imminent danger facing airport*

workers, taxi men, passengers, airline staff, and the scientists themselves who were exposed on June 1997?

Madam Speaker said:

Take your mic, please. I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the principal lessons learned are outlined as follows:

The importance of education: Public awareness and education are vital in ensuring that communities understand the risks they face and the actions they need to take in the event of volcanic activities.

Effective risk communication: Timely and clear communication between scientists, authorities, and the public is critical and crucial to prevent loss of life and to ensure that warnings are taken seriously.

Preparedness and infrastructure: Adequate planning and investment in emergency shelters of international standards in the northern safe zone, which are essential to support displaced populations and maintain public safety.

Security and access control: Proper security measures and protocols are already in place to manage movement in and out of the restricted or high-risk zones and will be reinforced depending on the state of volcanic unrest. These include man gates and surveillance to prevent unauthorized returns to dangerous areas. And five

Community involvement in planning: Local communities must be involved in disaster preparedness and planning. This ensures that evacuation plans, shelters, and communication methods are culturally appropriate and practically useful. How does the government intend to share these lessons?

Madam Speaker said:

He didn't ask that question yet.

The Honourable Premier said:

Oh, he didn't ask that yet. I'm kind of hungry, you see, so I'm trying to speed through.

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

7. And can the Honourable Premier tell this Honourable House how he intends to share these lessons with others in the Caribbean and around the world?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Lessons learned from the Montserrat volcanic situation can be shared through multiple strategies, including, and I'll change that from can be, but have been:

Regional and international conferences - hosting and participating in conferences like the recently concluded SHV30 conference organized by the MVO provides a platform to share experiences, best practices, scientific findings, etc. with regional and global stakeholders.

Documentation and knowledge sharing - documenting the events, lessons learned, and response strategies in accessible formats such as reports, policy briefs, academic papers, and case studies. These materials can be shared with other small island developing states and disaster-prone regions to help inform their own preparedness strategies.

Partnership with regional organisations - collaborating with institutions such as the CEDEMA and the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre helps disseminate knowledge across the Caribbean and strengthen regional disaster resilience frameworks.

Capacity building and training - training programs, technical exchanges, and simulations involving emergency responders, scientists, and policy makers from other islands and nations.

Public awareness campaigns and media outreach - Using documentaries, public service announcements, and educational campaigns can raise awareness and share Montserrat's story as a cautionary and instructive example worldwide.

Madam Speaker, I also have two 28-page documents produced by the MVO which I can share with the Honourable Member if he is committed to reading them.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would be happy to receive those documents, and may I ask a supplemental, please? Honourable Premier, are you willing to share and explain the findings of the coroner's inquest mentioned in this question, which speak to negligence on the part of the UK Government and the Government of Montserrat?

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable, Honourable Member, your supplementary is to be based on the responses that he gave. That has nothing to do with his response, and therefore, it is not allowed.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, he said the importance of education, public awareness, and effective risk management communication. I am referring to that. I will leave it.

Madam Speaker said:

You spoke specifically to the coroner's report. He did not include that in his response.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

My question referred to it. Let's continue, it's alright.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if you will permit me, I will...

Madam Speaker said:

No Honourable Premier. I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

My next question, Madam Speaker.

8. It was recently announced that the Cabinet has decided to reduce the cost of freight considered in the calculation of duties on all import goods. Can the Honourable Minister of Finance tell this Honourable House how this will affect the cost of propane as well as gasoline and diesel at the pumps?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, the price build-up will change with each shipment. However, in terms of order of magnitude, the following is an example, and this is only an example, of the savings. Assuming someone buys five gallons every week of regular gasoline, the saving would be \$119.60 per year. If it is HS or LS diesel, the saving would be the same, \$119.60 per year. Premium gasoline, saving of \$85.80 per year. And this, Madam Speaker, is assuming a minimal consumption of five gallons per week.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My next and last question.

9. *The Honourable Premier recently stated that he can guarantee an up... Sorry. The Honourable Premier recently stated that he can guarantee an uplift in income for some individuals once the necessary evidence that is required and being gathered is presented to the FCDO. Can the Honourable Premier tell this Honourable House what amount of an uplift he is guaranteeing and to whom specifically he offers the said guarantee?*

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, as has been explained earlier in my ministerial statement, the extent of the recommendations can only be determined after the comprehensive poverty assessment study is completed and the evaluations and recommendations have been made.

Madam Speaker said:

I gather that's it for questions.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Supplemental, please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, I just have to ask the Honourable Premier.

If he has to wait on the British to respond to the evidence he provides, then what guarantee can he really offer, which he promised? Can you offer a guarantee when you have not presented the evidence to someone when you say their response depends on the evidence?

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I really do not understand how a former Minister for Finance cannot understand what it states by having a study in order to provide data for the negotiation of funds. The comprehensive poverty assessment study, when it's completed and the evaluations and recommendations have been made, we can then make a case for any funding coming out as a consequence of this study and the data which has been provided.

Madam Speaker said:

That's it, Honourable Romeo? I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if it pleases you, may I move a motion for the suspension of the sitting for an hour and a half? Is that acceptable? For an hour and a half, it is now 1.45 pm. Could we resume an hour and a half after that? I'm too old to calculate that.

Madam Speaker said:

That's quarter past three.

The Honourable Premier said:

Yes. I move that motion. Madam Speaker, while I'm on my feet, may I humbly apologise for what you may have considered shouting by myself across the floor and to the other members of the House.

Madam Speaker said:

The House, I agree.

The Honourable Premier said:

My humblest apologies but...

Madam Speaker said:

No buts. No buts. No buts.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I'm saying I am hopeful that my apology will be accepted by all. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

And I hope it doesn't happen again. I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, I rise to support the much-needed... Madam Speaker, the well-being of the House, including the Members and those who serve this House, Madam Speaker, we are much in need of a break, and so I support the move for the recess until 3.15 p.m., Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, you see, the brain is getting muddled. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

It has been moved, Members. Okay. The question has not been put yet. It has been moved and seconded that this Honourable House stand adjourned for lunch until 3:15 p.m.

The question was put and carried

Madam Speaker said:

This Honourable House now stands adjourned for lunch until 3:15.

THE HOUSE ADJOURNED AT 1.45 PM FOR LUNCH

THE HOUSE RESUMED AT 3.15 PM

9. MOTIONS

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

First Reading – Supplementary Appropriation No. 6 Bill 2025

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if it pleases you, I rise to move a motion for the first reading of the ***Supplementary Appropriation No. 6 Bill of 2025***.

Madam Speaker said:

Do we have a seconder? I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier. I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture. Sorry.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion for the ***Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 6 of 2025***.

Madam Speaker said:

It has been moved and seconded that the ***Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 6 of 2025*** be read a first time.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill will be read a first time.

The Clerk said:

Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 6 of 2025

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Premier.

Second Reading – Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 6 of 2025

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, if it pleases you, I rise to move a motion for the second reading of the **Supplementary Appropriation No. 6 Bill of 2025**. Madam Speaker, this is a Bill to sanction certain payments from the consolidated fund in excess of the sums provided by law for the services of the Government of Montserrat for the period ending 31st day of March 2026. Madam Speaker, from time to time, we need to release funds, especially those coming in from funding agencies, to facilitate the continued work of the Government. The various sums of money are set out under the schedule totaling \$849,000 in addition to the sum of \$136,200,000 granted under the Development Fund Votes by the Appropriation Act of 2025, No. 2 of 2025.

Madam Speaker, if I may, this Bill is a rather simple one. Vote 30, Head 300, Funding Agent, Darwin. Funding Agent, Darwin. The Ministry is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment, Youth, and Sports. The project is managing the invasive fire ants species which we have in Montserrat. And we're allocating \$19,700 to that to complete the spending under the Darwin initiative.

The second one is under BUILTE. It's to deal with the energy lighting, and disposal. This is really for concluding this particular project. We have to deal with the auditing and other such requirements to ensure we can close out this project properly. In like manner, the post-COVID energy efficiency, which is similar to the one enunciated above, is for the sum of \$71,800. So, both of those are pretty much for the same project.

Ministry of Health and Social Services, improving triage and remote monitoring capacity to the sum of \$626,000. And what we're doing is removing \$449,000 and reallocating it in the line above. Ministry of Health and Social Services, procurement of a mini-lab, which is critically important for the use of the medical professionals. And that's to the sum of \$464,800. This gives a total of \$849,000. So, Madam Speaker, this is what the Bill seeks to provide under the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. The funding agents, and I want to remind us again, they're Darwin, the European Union, and the United Kingdom Health Support Agency.

Madam Speaker said:

We have a seconder, please. Recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, I just rise to move the motion for the second reading.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate. I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, indeed, this is pretty much a simple Bill. I, however, have some observations that I want to bring to light. I, too, support the \$19,700 to manage the Invasive Fire Ants Project. I appreciate the fact that these ants, Madam Speaker, can be a real bother to people and destruction to your yard, your lawn, etc. And I'm happy to know that there's funding left to put towards this project to allow them to complete, well, I don't know if they'll be able to complete the assignment, but at least complete the funding under the Darwin Project. Madam Speaker, I know that this supplementary, it's basically coming to the end of the Parliament, this Parliament year. However, it's not the end of the financial year. And I'm hoping that coming forward, Madam Speaker, because my observation here is that I am pretty much aware that there is no assignment of funds here for some of the issues that are plaguing farmers that would have come out of the same department as the department or Ministry that's dealing with the invasive fire ants. And I'm sure the minister will be able to confirm that they do have a lot of issues, not only with fire ants, but from the farming point of view, the wild rabbits, the agouti, the birds, and sometimes the human beings who see themselves as borrowing stuff, not returning them.

So, Madam Speaker, I would have liked to see some funds in that area, especially where the nets and so forth are concerned, as some farmers are saying that's all they would need to help capture some of these pests, so to speak. And I'm already aware, Madam Speaker, of recent times I've gotten complaints of the wild dogs attacking animals and destroying the animals. So, it's a difficult time for the farmers,

whether you're a crop farmer or animal farmer, and it's always been difficult for farmers. Somehow, we haven't been able to get it right over the years. So, any funds that could have been put or included in the supplementary to address these would have been welcome, and I do trust that the next supplementary that comes to the House would have in funds to deal with these issues.

I also, Madam Speaker, realized that we'd have touched on the abattoir in previous questioning, and the minister himself would have indicated, of course, he would like to get further funds. The importance, Madam Speaker, when we came up with the abattoir some time ago, was not just to have an abattoir, but to ensure that when you're slaughtering, that it's done under international standards and so people have that trust that what they're eating, that it was done under the standards, and therefore no need to be worried. Because we really want to move away from the slaughtering in the bushes and so forth.

Madam Speaker, I looked at the 115,800 under the Energy Efficient Lighting Project, and be that, Madam Speaker, is an energy-related project. I can't help but imagine, Madam Speaker, funding, Madam Speaker, being included to address some issues in terms of the continuous damage of appliances and of course Madam Speaker government would say they don't have the funds to replace all these appliances but at least I would like to see the funding in place to address the issues or the ongoing recurring issues at MUL so that going forward we do not have these destruction of appliances.

Madam Speaker, I also see that \$626,000 is assigned, thanks to the EU, to allow for financial audit of the project, and indeed it's common practice to audit projects. I can't help but raise at this point, Madam Speaker, given the state of affairs of the port project or port whatever as the Premier call it a jetty because is not really a port project, but a jetty so to speak. Madam Speaker, I do hope that there are funds available in future supplementary or maybe under the project itself, not just for financial audit, Madam Speaker, but general audit. I'm sure you're mindful that you can have all the finances in the world, but if we don't have the necessary expertise from the construction company side to implement this project, this project will go nowhere. So, you can throw how much money you want at it, and it still goes nowhere unless you have the expertise necessary to deliver.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to speak also to the mini lab project, and I think this is an excellent move. The fact that the funds are there to not only build the lab but also to provide some training for the healthcare persons that will be working within the lab, and of course, Madam Speaker, when we see improvement, we are quick to also applaud and just as much as we are quick to critique when we see a need for improvement. So, Madam Speaker, with these few words, I rest my case.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to the debate on this Supplementary Appropriation 2025 Bill, which seeks to authorize additional expenditure of \$849,000 from the Development Fund for the current financial year. This Bill is supported by explanatory notes that outline various projects across multiple ministries. However, Madam Speaker, I must say that the explanations provided raise many questions as they attempt to answer.

Madam Speaker, nearly a million dollars of additional funding is being sought primarily to audit, close or adjust existing projects. I am not against responsible spending, Madam Speaker. I'm not against projects that improve health, enhance energy efficiency or support environmental protection. However, what I am against is the lack of ongoing transparency, poor reporting and the absence of clear indicators of value for money. We have a duty to scrutinize public spending, and we can only do so effectively if we are continuously updated on development activities. So, to clarify, the Opposition and its Members must receive progress reports throughout the life of every project funded under this and every other appropriation. We cannot afford to wait until the end of the fiscal year to realize or to point out that maybe something was left out, or it was not done or that the money that was spent has no measurable value to the people of Montserrat. From my knowledge, Madam Speaker, quarterly reports are supposed to be submitted to the office of the Opposition and its Members. This practice, I must say, must be enforced. I don't know where along it has been dropped off, but it should be enforced. So, if we are to exercise

proper oversight and to help ensure that public funds are well spent, we need access to the project proposal, the quarter reports and the final reports, not just summaries, because I must say the notes are very vague in some areas.

In clause (b) in the notes, it refers to energy efficiency lighting project for which \$115,800 is now being requested. This project according to the notes, will support the completion of various elements to include financial audit but Madam Speaker public funds are being allocated and this amount could not just be to do or to undertake an audit but it must be to deliver impact the people of Montserrat. So, I would ask what are the various elements being referred to here? Will this project reduce the electricity bill of residents? Will the government's monthly streetlighting bill decrease? Will there be reduced energy consumption in our schools, hospitals or government buildings? Will we see cost savings that can be redirected to vital services for example, education, taking care of the elderly or even something as simple as yet essential as fixing numerous potholes that are damaging our vehicles and injuring our citizens? These are the real outcomes the public expect so there needs to be a breakdown of the various elements as \$115,800 like I said before cannot just be for a financial audit. We must be able to measure results and not just expenditures.

Under point (d), this raises further legitimate questions. It also refers to various elements to include a financial audit under this project. This is asking for a \$626,000 on an audit as a main expenditure item which surely cannot be just an audit. This project is supposed to be about resilience. So, I again ask, what are the various elements that are to be undertaken with this \$626,000? So what specific work is expected to be done? What are the deliverables? What are the timelines? What are the measurable outcomes? We need to know, and the people also need to know. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I must emphasize that the explanatory notes should explain, they should be detailed, clear and precise.

(F), refers to a mini lab project for Montserrat, but it does not outline the objectives. Where will this mini lab be located? What is the staffing plan? How will maintenance and consumables be funded beyond just set-up? Therefore, Madam Speaker the basis of the Bill is a good one but I hereby just formally request that the project proposals and

the project reports for all the projects listed in this Bill be made available to the office of the Opposition. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Do we have any other inputs? I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, like the Honourable Members of the Opposition, I want to make it very clear that I am in full support of the supplemental. I think there are a lot of people out there who never remember when we actually support Bills and only think when we challenge Bills, and that is our job. Yet, they forget that we actually do agree to the majority of Bills in this House, majority. Madam Speaker, today we are here to sanction the addition of \$849,000. I don't need to repeat what's said before by the Premier, Honourable Lewis and others, but the Premier said that this is a simple Bill, and I know when he says that, he is hoping that there won't be much debate. Simple, so he doesn't want to hear much debate. It's psychology. Now I know, and I don't plan to be very long either but I also want to agree with Honourable Lewis, Leader of the Opposition who clearly stated that while he agreed with various elements of this Bill that there are certain urgent matters that are not being addressed and again I want to make it plain that I'm not blaming the Government of Montserrat. This government is a 6-month-old government for all of the issues that we are facing right now. They've inherited a very serious situation. They've inherited what was inherited by the previous government and what was inherited by me and others, so I don't want anybody to be accusing me now of challenging the government that I am blaming them. So, if I sound that way, please, I hope people correct me.

So, like Honourable Lewis, you look at the supplemental estimates, and you go under police, no increase; Legal, no increase; Magistrate court, no increase; Supreme Court, no increase; Legislature, no increase; Audit, no increase; Office of the Deputy Governor, no increase; Public Procurement, no increase. And I'm only saying that, and please, don't take it wrongly. As Honourable Lewis said, there are some urgent issues that need to be addressed. And we are hoping that by next supplemental, that some of these issues will appear in these

columns, showing that there are some issues that they going to be addressed and again, most people in Montserrat know me, I'm not in Opposition for the first time. I don't just challenge the government before me, I help them to challenge the British Government who in the end our government have to negotiate with and how do I put it, we're talking about \$71,000 for post COVID to energy efficiency and that is important, full support but we went through an entire COVID period without the substantial help that was needed. And the lack of that support created a socio-economic hardship that this government is going to have a huge job of addressing. And if we were in England, the United Kingdom government, you know what they would have done? What they did during COVID. If they came into office now, they'd be borrowing money to add supplemental to address the issues. But because we have to negotiate it, it takes a while. And that is why I'm speaking very openly here. It's not just a simple Bill, because this supplemental is an extension of the entire Appropriation Bill. And what I've learned from Mr. Brandt and from Sir Howard Fergus and others in the past, it opens the opportunity to debate the entire Appropriation Bill, anything in any of these lines here. For instance, Madam Speaker, in support of the government, I want to say that I would have loved to see for the Minister of Agriculture, money is provided for grants. You know you don't have to always buy land and survey it. Grants, instead of \$40,000, \$60,000 to \$80,000 grants, that would enable people to go to the bank and borrow. And the banks would understand, there's a substantial increase in the amount provided as security against a loan. In the UK, what did they do? They offered security to loans during COVID. They offered the bank the security needed so that young people and others could buy a home. That didn't happen in Montserrat. So, I would have loved to see that happen here.

Again, the government came up with a small amount of money. How much was it? A million something, I don't remember, for helping businesses. How much was it Honourable? One million. And I know the Honourable Premier and the Minister of Agriculture and others would have loved to have a more significant figure. So, I am supporting them and I want to support them if we are given the chance in making the case for that next supplemental that these things could be addressed. We need millions of dollars for a challenge fund to help businesses to get out of the rut they're in. That's what they did in England. They even gave monies to people to buy food during COVID so

the restaurants survived it. What did happen to us? Nothing. We're resilient. They say we're resilient. And when you look at it, what else can I say?

The secondary school. I know we're waiting on the Honourable Premier with the research that's needed to get the funds to increase salaries and incomes and I look forward to that change. But will it be substantial enough to encourage teachers to stay? Will it be substantial enough to encourage civil servants to stay? So, the extent to which we succeed in negotiating is very serious. And Madam Speaker, and not my words and I have to, in representing the people of Montserrat, make sure I'm clear. I am not blaming the Government of Montserrat that is before me, six-month government, for the 35% poverty that Montserrat is labelled with. 35% poverty. I'm not blaming you for the worsening depopulation, the hopelessness, the accumulated inflation that has been addressed since COVID and the Ukraine war. I am not blaming you. I'm not blaming you that pensioners cannot support themselves properly. What I'm saying is, and I'm saying this, I'm going to first quote what DIFID said, I've read it many times, in 2005, 20 years ago, this is what they said.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable Member, you're speaking to the supplementary?

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Of course, Madam Speaker. I'm speaking about how we can get more funds to add to the supplemental. I'm speaking to the Appropriation Bill and negotiations over the Appropriation Bill. In, for instance, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Lewis spoke about what he would love to see. So there has to be...

Madam Speaker said:

I was just making sure.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Good, good. I know you're making sure. Thank you, as usual. It says that without substantial external support, there is no likelihood of

Montserrat achieving its ambitions. The population will decline further, and more people will become more heavily dependent on public services, and the government would increasingly struggle to fund and implement this. This will lead inexorably to the collapse of the island's social, economic, and governance structures. Folks, I know one day history is going to show that Don Romeo is probably the best friend to the government across here. In that, I keep raising issues, providing solutions, and providing information and evidence that will help us. That is my job. I'm 63. There's no point in waiting to become Premier or Minister again. I need to spend this time agitating and encouraging the government to succeed.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope you get the point I'm making. Madam Speaker, I would have loved to see you speaking about energy efficiency here, 71,000 post-COVID, which I mentioned, as Honourable Mulcare kind of alluded to. What about people not being able to pay their bills, living from hand to mouth, day to day, week to week, month to month? We are not able to address this here, Madam Speaker, but this is what the debate must be about. Not just saying we approve some money and put it in. There must be some conversation about what we're going to do to make significant, substantial change. Otherwise, we are going to be in serious trouble in a matter of months. If there isn't a supplemental bringing change to our situation, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, all of us have salaries, you know, solid salaries, set. Some of us have a pension. Some of us, yes, whatever you think, it's solid compared to what the people out there are facing. So, I have to represent them. And I can't just come in here and just talk a little and go home, and no, no, no, no, I have to speak to these things, Madam Speaker.

And, you know, just to help you, help us to have a proper discussion here. I want to reinforce again the issue of the need for a ferry. That there's nothing in here that suggests, except for promises that we're procuring, that a ferry is within the view for December or March. This doesn't suggest it's not here. So, I'm encouraging the Honourable Premier that by next time, the supplemental, very soon, September, I mean, we need to have some clear idea as to when we will have a ferry. Because this morning, as you notice, we have an issue with Medi-vacs. It could be any one of us, at night. And the only solution, if there's no air access, is to have a ferry. And within days, if the British

Government wants, they could have a ferry. You know that? Days. Within days. They have the power to do that. The British Government was the one who gave St. Helena £300 million for an airport. And part of that argument was to get people to medical care quickly. But before that, 30 years ago, they provided a ship, not a ferry, a ship costing £30 million back then, £30 million back then.

So, we know the British Government has the capability. And I stand here knowing that if we unite as one parliament, I guarantee you, Honourable Premier, that there will be much more of a substantial response if we are united. If we are united over this whole issue of Montserrat getting out of the rut we're in. So, despite what you heard happen this morning, the Honourable Premier, I am willing. I am willing to give my support, and this contribution is part of it. And Madam Speaker, to make sure that I don't sit down without emphasizing something that I must lobby for. I'm lobbying for every man in this room, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I love you for the fact that you like evidence. You ask me for evidence when I speak. So, I'm sharing with you, Madam Speaker, the letter written to the Secretary of State, the evidence provided to make the argument for a swift move from Islanders, which have a safety issue, to Twin Otters. And a swift move to providing a ferry. A swift move to providing a ferry. So, this was presented before, and I'm sharing with you again because I will be writing to the Secretary of State again.

I have not had a proper response, I must say. Not satisfied with response I had. I was sent to the Governor, the Governor responsible for the whole mess prior to this. I'm sent to her and that doesn't work. And I also want to share, Madam Speaker, something I shared with you. A document showing that the failure to come up with supplements that provide funding to address safety led to loss of life. What you didn't hear during the conference is in this very short document, which I will share with you again and I will circulate to everybody. I won't do it by paper. And I'm hoping that these things will be added to the Minutes of the Legislature so that the public can go and not only see the debate or the script from the debate, but can see the documents too. Digitally, at least. Or the hard copy is there for somebody to get if they want to read or in the library, probably. So, Madam Speaker, this document refers to the fact that a warning was given to close the air-

port 16 days before the people got killed at the airport, near the airport, yet nothing was done. A warning from the scientists.

Madam Speaker said:

Honourable remain relevant to the supplementary please.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

So, Madam Speaker, very relevant, Madam Speaker, because, Madam Speaker, I just wish you would allow me because I'm nearly finished. The point I'm making is that I'm making an appeal for supplementals following this. The Appropriation Bill we have to be adjusted further because we act to see that something happens. It's not going to happen unless we act together. We have to act through Resolution, through whatever means, to make the change for the people of Montserrat. So, here I'm submitting these documents, and I'm letting the public know. And I will continue to make my appeal and lobby for us to get a ferry, to get night flying, to protect life and, Madam Speaker, this supplemental does not have any provision for negligence. So, you want to hear about this Bill? If there is negligence and we are negligent, we can be found or forced to take monies from this supplemental to cover negligence on our part. So, Madam Speaker, with that, I will end my presentation. And thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. And thank you to the Opposition for actually supporting the Bill. And because they supported the Bill, Madam Speaker, I'll keep my address quite short. But I think that when we're giving our submissions, sometimes we have to clarify it so that the public doesn't get the wrong impression. And I'll keep my submission just to the agriculture side of the Appropriation Bill, the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. If you look at the Bill, Agriculture has \$19,700 in the Appropriation Bill. But more importantly, you need to look at the funding agents to which those monies are coming from. In the case of Ministry of Agriculture, that funding agent would be Dar-

win, the Darwin Initiative. And the Darwin Initiative has its own *modus operandi*, if you want to put it that way, along the lines of biosecurity. So, while I do take their submission, Madam Speaker, that they would love to see other things in the Bill, they must also understand that when you're getting money from certain funding agents, they have specific requirements and specific uses. So, I cannot then take money from the Darwin Initiative to do other things. Madam Speaker, the fire ants project is a Darwin project, because as I said, the Darwin's *modus operandi* is biosecurity. And while it was mentioned that fire ants pose a risk to farmers and people, really and truly is the reason why that project was approved under the Darwin is because the fire ants is a biosecurity risk to other organisms, especially like our moths and our bees. So, it was approved under that, Madam Speaker. So, needless to say, we cannot use money from agencies like Darwin for other purposes other than what they have been approved for.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and I must say thank you, along with the Honourable Nyota Mulcare, because you often visit my office. So, thank you for doing so. I would encourage the Honourable Donaldson Romeo to do the same. And we would have spoken about some of the issues that you would have brought up as well too, and I just want to reassure you today that we are looking into those.

Honourable Romeo, I don't want to really go down a certain line, but I think if you joined them when they visited, some of the things that you bring up probably... Okay, fair enough. So, you're probably off-island more than you're here. But some of the things that you brought up, for instance, like loan securities and stuff, if you looked at the original Appropriation Bill, you would see that the Ministry has \$2.1 million, of which \$1.1 million will actually go to one of the financial institutions for exactly what you mentioned in your speech. The other 1 million would then come into the Ministry, and recently, we actually did what we call a farmer's assessment. Well, farmers, fishers and agri-producers assessment. And again, we are trying to be a data-driven government. So instead of me creating policies on a whim, we're using the data from the farmers and that money, that 1 million would go into exactly what you spoke about as well, which is direct grants for the farmers. And this year, I can tell you that we have a, how to put it, a focus on poultry production. So, we're looking at poultry production, and part of the reason for that is during my travels at

the OECS, poultry production seems to be... well, not seems, it is one of those things that is on the rise in the Caribbean, the OECS states. So, from that data, we see that most of the OECS states are actually importing more and more chicken, Montserrat also. So, we're looking at poultry production as our focus for that.

And Madam Speaker, I will just end on that because they haven't been very contentious, but I figured I just wanted to clarify so that persons understand that we can't just take every money that comes into the appropriation bill and do what we feel like with it.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, I may have to ask to sit but I'll stand. No, I say I may, but I'll see how I manage. I'm fine. Yes, I think I manage. Madam Speaker, I have heard Honourable Mulcare and the others, and we welcome their feedback. And it's one of the things that we've always said when we bring Appropriation Bills to the House, that they must be clearly delineated what they're to be used for. So, we can have that information in due course, as well as the Public Account Committee also have that jurisdiction in terms of oversight. But I have no umbrage with what was put forward. For myself, I have advocated that previously, always holding on to my benchmark democratic legislative handbook from our PAC training. And we want to strengthen our Parliament in this oversight role. And so, I have no difficulty with that. We'll give that outline for my Ministry in terms of what we're doing with the lighting, which one is for lighting. And as we heard, the other portion is to address the auditing of the accounts for the RESEMBID. It's an EU project, but not because an EU project does not mean that this House does not have the right to examine what is put before it and see whether it is something that should be allocated. So, I thank you for that intervention, and I would like to give details as far as possible so I can get that in writing from the Ministry, so that you understand exactly, rather than just speaking to it, that we can put it in writing for yourselves at some point. So, thank you for your intervention in that regard. Okay. And just to say we can't move money from lighting to roads. If I could have done that, I would have been

very happy with yourselves to get rid of those potholes that our people, including myself, are suffering from. But it's not about me, it's always about the people. So yes, thank you for that support and that intervention.

I will seek to do whatever we can to advance the completion of the pothole remedying, as well as get our roads as smoothly as possible within the financial means that we have. Because I would want some beautiful, smooth roads like what I saw in Bahamas the other day, and in Bequia as well. But everything takes time, and as we work together, we can seek to advance that. Okay.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Parliamentary Secretary Buffonge.

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I just rise to support the Appropriation Bill. I've said many times before that any monies that come into the appropriation or through appropriation to our coffers are welcomed, because these will go to benefiting persons, whether you're combating fire ants as a homeowner, or you're going to benefit from the mini-lab at the Ministry of Health. These will be helping persons. So, thankful for the Appropriation Bill. Madam Speaker, I want to say congratulations again to the Ministry of BUILTE, or formerly MCWLE, with their approach in dealing with the energy-efficient lighting in our energy reduction. I'm sure a lot of persons across the country would have benefited in carrying their bulbs, and whatever they plan to do with these funds, whether it be auditing or the completion of the project, Madam Speaker, we are welcome for that.

Just a question of continuity for me, for the Minister of Health, with relation to the mini-lab and the other aspects of the funding, whether or not it will come into our current budget going forward, because it seems to be a one-off. So, you have some questions about continuity and whether or not we'll be able to afford it from our next year's recurrent budget. And, as far as Darwin and fire ants, and the treatment of fire ants, Madam Speaker, I want to thank Darwin. Little as it may be, some \$19,000 is not a lot of money in treating with fire ants. My pre-

vious experience tells me that that's nowhere close to the amount you need to deal with the problem we have on island regarding our fauna, our vegetation, and our farming is nowhere near enough.

We got some flak when the aggregate came for the port project, and the measures that were put in place in terms of containing or making sure that the giant African snail did not make it to Montserrat. The same thing happened with the fire ants; they got here sometime in a previous project, and these are the kind of accountability we have to show as parliamentarians in dealing with the longer picture or the bigger picture in managing projects and in funding. So, whatever the Ministry can do to aid our citizens in dealing with these threats, especially fire ants, is appreciated by everyone.

So, again, I support the Appropriation Bill. Of course, there will never be enough money to solve all the issues we have on Montserrat, and whatever approach we can take, whether it's working with the Opposition or lobbying harder, that's what we're going to have to do to move Montserrat forward. Again, support the Appropriation Bill, and thank you for the time, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Any other? Or, I'll ask the Honourable Premier to wrap up. I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I need for us to understand that the Development Fund votes as submitted here are funds which have been provided specifically by funding agents. This is not money from FCDO. We had a budget which was approved in April. Unless we have a further uplift of funds from the FCDO, our supplementary appropriation will be based on funds that are coming in from other sources, or perhaps in September, if in fact we have benefits coming as a consequence of exchange rate gains, then those could be allocated accordingly. But as we speak, we cannot just move funds to say, okay, you want to do roads, you want to do this, that, and the other, and therefore you need to find money for it. We have to follow a budgeting process, and this is what is be-

fore us. Funds from Darwin, funds from EU, and funds from the UK Health Support Agency.

As it relates to the triage and remote monitoring capability, if in fact there is a need for additional information, there are places where information could be gathered. The Minister for Health is here. I know that she is willing to discuss with anyone anything in relation to health, so we'd have to make it a big issue. As it relates to reporting to this House, and we have to report to the Opposition office, absolute rubbish. There is, pardon me, that's not parliamentary, so should I say nonsense? Okay, thank you very much. There is a public accounts committee where Members of the Opposition are in the majority on the Public Accounts Committee, and they have the opportunity to ask questions on any aspects of the public accounts of Montserrat. You don't have to wait until the accounts are provided to you. If there is an issue, you can raise it in your Public Accounts Committee meetings. So, I just wanted to make that clear.

Then I think I heard something about some papers circulating that we need to talk to the British Government about getting rid of the Islanders and bringing in Twin Otters. Madam Speaker, sometimes I wonder if some of us sit on our heads and sit on our ears because they don't hear. We have indicated in this House today that Winair is currently operating three flights a week into Montserrat using Twin Otters, and they will be operating seven days a week in the peak season. And in fact, SVG will be operating Twin Otter services come September of this year. So why do we need to lead a petition to the British Government to seek to get money to do what we're doing already? In my earlier statement, I also indicated that we are currently, currently, Madam Speaker, tendering for ferry services. Do we need to lobby the British Government for something which we are already doing? Do we just talk for the sake of talking and believe that people don't hear what we're saying? Yes, we're tendering for a ferry service. This has nothing to do with the British Government and lobbying them to provide us with a ferry service. The ministerial statement spoke to that.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to budgeting and finance, we need to recognise that Supplementary Appropriation Bills are supplementing the budget that was provided at the beginning of the year. And unless we get additional funding, either from FCDO for special projects or

from other agencies, it is pointless for us to say we should be doing X, Y, or Z in Supplementary Appropriation Bills. It cannot happen. It can only happen if you get additional funding. Now, yes, I know you understand you were a Minister of Finance and therefore don't talk to, we need to give money to farmers, we need to reallocate money for fixing roads. Where are you taking those funds from?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, what's your Point of Order?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, nowhere in my discourse did I speak about taking money from one place to put anywhere. I spoke of getting additional money. Nowhere in my discourse did I not admit that you're moving to Twin Otters, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Who did he refer to? Was it you?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. He gave the impression that we're talking about shifting monies from one place to another. I'm talking about getting additional money.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, but did he say you said it, why are you defending?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Because he's not saying it correctly. He's misrepresenting what was said. And Madam Speaker, I'm speaking about getting Twin Otters and the ferry urgently. Anything could happen next week. I'm not talking about later.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay. Honourable Premier, please continue with your presentation, and let's keep the discourse relevant.

The Honourable Premier said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. And I don't want to say what I said this morning about firing stone in the pigpen.

Madam Speaker said:

So, don't say it.

The Honourable Premier said:

No, I'm not going to say it. I'm not going to say anything about firing Stone in pigpen, and who gets hit will squeal. Not going to say it. But what I want to say is this. You expect us to just jump up and say to the British Government, no, we need Twin Otter services tomorrow morning when in fact we are saying that we have already started the process of procuring Twin Otter services, they're technical issues as to why the SVG Twin Otters cannot land as we speak and we're dealing with those technical issues to allow them to be able to land come September. That's all I'm saying. So, Madam Speaker, I hope that I've clarified in some respects what the Supplementary Appropriation Bill is about, and I do commend it to the House for a second reading.

Madam Speaker said:

It has been moved and seconded that the Supplementary Appropriation 2025 Bill be read a second time.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill will be read a second time.

The Clerk said:

Supplementary Appropriation Bill, No. 6 of 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

The House will now go into committee to consider the Bill in further detail.

COMMITTEE STAGE

Madam Chair said:

And so, we'll begin with the supply vote summary. It actually has a zero-dollar supplement. So, just for completeness and to ensure that it is captured in the records. I would just put the question that the supplemental amount of \$0. So, there's an authorized estimate of \$175,883,300. \$0 supplement, still with the balance of \$175,883,300, should form part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The supplement amount of \$0 now forms part of the schedule. Yes, so the supplemented amount of \$0 under the total supply vote stands part of the schedule. Thanks.

Move on to the development fund votes. Do we want to read the details since they are going to be captured in the summary? I can read them out and let's put one question. Okay, so I think I'll go straight into the summary of the development fund votes. And I'll just read those that are affected. So, vote 30, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs, and Sports. An authorized estimate of \$4,393,800 supplemented with \$19,700 for a revised estimate of \$4,413,500 that it should stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Vote 30, Ministry of Agriculture, under the development fund votes, supplemented amount of \$19,700 stands part of the schedule.

Vote 35, Ministry of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour, and Transportation. An authorized estimate of \$35,719,300 with a supplemented amount of \$187,600 for a revised estimate of \$35,906,900. The question is that these amounts stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Vote 35, Ministry of Building, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour, and Transportation development fund vote supplement of \$187,600 stands part of the schedule.

Vote 45, Ministry of Health and Social Services. Authorized estimate of \$51,119,000, revised, sorry, supplemented amount of \$641,700. Revised estimate of \$51,760,700 should form part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Vote 45, Ministry of Health and Social Services supplemented amount of \$641,700 stand part of the schedule. And the further question is that the development fund supplemented with an amount of \$849,000 should stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The development fund vote supplement of \$849,000 now stands part of the schedule. And we look at the summary. Total supply vote supplement of \$0. That should stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The supply vote total of \$0 stands part of the schedule. The development vote amount of \$849,000 that it should stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The development fund vote supplement of \$849,000 now stand part of the schedule. And the total supplementary, therefore, remains at \$849,000. The question is that it should stand part of the schedule, the total amount should stand part of the schedule.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The total supplementary of \$849,000 now stand as part of the schedule. The question is that the schedule should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The schedule now stands part of the Bill. Let's move on to the clauses. Clauses 1 to 3, the question is that it should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 1 to 3 now stand as part of the Bill. Enacting Clause and Long Title. The question that the Enacting Clause and Long Title should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The Enacting Clause and Long Title now stand as part of the Bill. And the final question is that the Bill should be reported to the Assembly.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The Bill will be reported to the Assembly.

RESUMPTION OF ASSEMBLY

Madam Speaker said:

The Assembly will now resume its sitting. I recognise the Honourable Premier, Minister of Finance.

Third Reading – Supplementary Appropriation 2025 Bill No. 6 of 2025

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I wish to report to this Honourable House that a Bill shortly entitled ***Supplementary Appropriation 2025 Bill No. 6 of 2025*** has gone through the committee stage of this House without any amendments and fully supported by all. Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence to seek a suspension of the appropriate Standing Order to facilitate the third reading of the Bill.

Madam Speaker said:

Members, it has been moved. Oh, we need a seconder, sorry. Recognise the Honourable Minister...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion for the suspension so that we can go forward and complete this Bill. Today, under normal circumstances, we would not be, but because it's a finance Bill, we can apply that rule.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you. It has been moved and seconded.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

And I also second the...

Madam Speaker said:

No, you don't need to second the third reading. It has been moved and seconded that Standing Order No. 53 be suspended to allow for the third reading of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2025.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

Standing Order No. 53 has been accordingly suspended. And it has been moved that the Bill, shortly entitled Supplementary Appropriation 2025 Bill, be read a third time and passed in this Honourable House.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill will now be read a third time.

The Clerk said:

Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 6 of 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill has been read a third time and is accordingly passed. I recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance.

Second Reading – Procurement Bill 2025 No. 5 of 2025

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I beg to move a motion for the second reading of the Procurement Bill 2025, No. 5 of 2025. Madam Speaker, this is a Bill that is very important in terms of doing things right and making adjustments where adjustments are necessary. And I think it is important for me to go through certain sections of the Bill.

Open tendering, Madam Speaker, means publishing a request or invitation for tenders and considering all submissions received in response to the invitation. Just thought I needed to make that clear.

Procurement means the acquisition of goods by any means, including purchase, rental, lease, or higher purchase, and the acquisition of works, consulting, and other services. There are some prohibited practices. An offence identified in the Part 6 of the Penal Code, Cap 4, a fraudulent practice consisting of any act or omission, including a misrepresentation that knowingly or recklessly misleads or attempts to mislead a party to obtain a financial or other benefit or to avoid an obligation. A collusive practice consisting of an arrangement between two or more parties designed to achieve an improper purpose, including influencing improperly the actions of another party. A coercive practice consisting in impairing or harming or threatening to impair or harm directly or indirectly any party or the property of the party to influence improperly the actions of a party.

Public contract means a contract for the supply in return for consideration of goods, works or services, including consulting services, between a procuring entity and a supplier.

Public funds mean all revenues or other monies raised or received by and for the purpose of the government. It also speaks to the Procurement Board, public service law, the need for publication, sustainable procurement, and so forth.

A tender. A tender means an offer made by way of tender or a proposal or quotation, including any amendment issued by a supplier to a procuring entity for the purpose of responding to an invitation for request to participate in a procurement process or participating in a procurement process.

What's the purpose and application of this Bill? The purpose of this Bill is to promote positive economic, environmental, and social value outcomes for Montserrat, to maximize value for money, quality, and efficiency, to promote competition, ensure fairness, transparency, and integrity, and ensure that funds are managed in accordance with the Public Finance Management and Accountability Act.

Madam Speaker, this Bill applies to every procuring entity. This Bill applies to every government-owned entity other than as prescribed. And where there is conflict between this Act and the regulations or

any other law of Montserrat in matters relating to public procurement, this Bill or this Act, when it's passed, will prevail.

There are certain exemptions. A procurement made under a regional or international cooperative procurement agreement, including among members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and I daresay we need to add in CARICOM as well. A contract awarded to a supplier from a framework agreement to which Montserrat is a party. A procurement for the purposes of national defence and national security. The acquisition or rental of land, existing buildings, or other immovable property, or the rights thereon.

Administrative structure for public procurement. The Financial Secretary is responsible for the administration of this Act, including the implementation of government's public procurement policies and securing Cabinet's approval of recommendations for any amendments or improvements to those procurement policies. It also speaks to the establishment of a Public Procurement Board. It's in the document. I'm not going to go through that. But the Public Procurement Board shall be responsible for reviewing and approving the membership of the Departmental Procurement Committee. The Departmental Procurement Committee deals with smaller allocations of funds, and the amount is in the document. But it's an upgrade from what was there before. Significant upgrade from what was there before. The Public Procurement Board may appoint committees, either generally or with respect to a specific matter, to advise the Public Procurement Board. So, if you're dealing with technical issues, you can have a committee with responsibility for advising the Public Procurement Board on those matters.

The Departmental Procurement Committee. The accounting officer of every procuring entity, shall, subject to subsection (2), establish a Departmental Procurement Committee comprising the accounting officer or senior public officer within the procuring entity delegated by the accounting officer who shall be the chairperson, at least two other senior public officers meeting the conditions, a member from the Public Procurement Board designated by the Head of Government Procurement Services, but that person shall not be able to vote. The Financial Secretary may, in the circumstances prescribed, direct that the functions of a Departmental Procurement Committee be transferred to a

different entity. It speaks to the evaluation panels and then their general provisions. All accounting officers shall, before the end of each financial year, prepare and submit to the Public Procurement Board an annual procurement plan in a form provided by the Head of Government Procurement Services.

Critically important. Government can also get into early market engagement. In preparing its procurement, a procuring entity may, in coordination with the Head of the Government Procurement Services, engage with suppliers and other parties in a non-discriminatory way for the purpose of developing the procuring entity's requirements and approach to the procurement.

Eligibility of suppliers. That goes into detail in terms of how suppliers become eligible for entry into the procurement system. This Act also speaks to giving local suppliers a certain leg up, up to about 20% of any procurement. This allows an outside contractor the flexibility of utilizing local services up to 20% or, in fact, a local tenderer can get a benefit of 15% advantage over an external tenderer. I think that answers the question that was raised earlier from the other side.

Madam Speaker, Part 5 deals with the award of public contracts. A procuring entity shall select the most appropriate method of procuring for each requirement as part of the procurement planning process from among the following. Open tendering, restricted tendering, requests for proposals, requests for quotations, direct contracting, or electronic reverse auction. The document itself speaks to what the electronic reverse auction is, so I will not seek to go into any detail there. The document also speaks to the open tendering, requests for proposal, restricted tendering, and the like.

Part 6 deals with the award of public contracts. And it gives the key procedural steps, which I will not go into.

Evaluation and award. I will not go into the details of that. It's there in the document.

Rejection of tenders. A procuring entity may reject any or all tenders, proposals, or quotations at any time prior to their acceptance when the tenders, proposals, or quotations submitted are not substantially re-

sponsive, or there is evidence of a lack of competition, or the supplier has a conflict of interest. And these are aspects which can lead to rejection of tenders, along with others.

We can also deal with the cancellation of procurement procedures. The cancellation of procurement proceedings shall be avoided whenever possible, but is permitted where the procurement need has ceased to exist or changed significantly. Importantly, if there is insufficient funding which is available for the procurement. So, in other words, you can't do the procurement unless you have sufficient funds to complete the project.

Part 7, sustainable procurement, deals with social value, environmental objectives. And then Part 8 deals with transparency and integrity. Deals with the publication of notices, procurement records and reports, conflict of interest, disclosure of interest in procuring proceedings, integrity, a public officer or persons who can influence a decision relating to a procurement shall not engage in or abet prohibited practices in a procurement process or the execution of a contract. So, Madam Speaker, fairly comprehensive. And Part 9 provides for challenge procedures. The right to challenge, suspension of procurement, as I had mentioned before, review of complaint by the procuring entity, appeal to the independent adjudicator.

Part 10 deals with the regulations. The Governor acting on the advice of Cabinet may, after consultation with the Public Procurement Board, make regulations generally for giving effect to the provisions of this Act. And their transitional arrangements, repeal of regulations, and the transitional arrangements, a procuring entity may continue any procurement proceeding in respect of the procurement of goods or services or works, commence before the coming into operation of this Act and which have not been determined, terminated, or completed. So, if a procurement process is started before this Bill comes into place, into effect as an Act, then that procurement is permitted to continue.

Madam Speaker, I trust that in going through in this level of detail that I would have made a presentation which makes this Bill a bit more understandable. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Madam Speaker, I rise. I'll second the proposal of the Procurement Act 2025, and I'd like to use the opportunity to add my contribution.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I rise to address this Honourable House regarding the Procurement Bill 2025. A piece of legislation that marks the significant moment in Montserrat's journey towards modern governance and transparency. I acknowledge the diligent work of the drafters and recognise their commitment to aligning our procurement systems with international standards. Yet it is the solemn duty of the Opposition to engage in rigorous scrutiny and to ensure that every law we pass serves the best interests of the people of Montserrat.

Public procurement is more than a technical exercise. It is a direct expression of our national values, an opportunity to advance fairness, inclusion, and prudent stewardship of public resources. It is in the spirit of constructive engagement that I present the following observations and recommendations aimed at elevating this Bill to its highest potential. This legislation presents us with a rare opportunity to overhaul outdated processes, strengthen public trust, and ensure that our procurement framework is fit for purpose in the present day. Accordingly, I submit seven key recommendations for the consideration of Parliament:

1. Update procurement thresholds to reflect current market realities, thereby increasing efficiency and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy.
2. Enhance democratic oversight by mandating Cabinet and Parliament involvement in high-value or strategically important awards while preserving the integrity of technical evaluations.
3. Establish a safe, confidential channel for reporting concerns, protecting both the integrity of our system and the individuals who serve within it.

4. Require publication of award outcomes, ensuring that the public can regularly access information about who was awarded contracts, the amounts involved, and rationale behind decisions.
5. Incorporate provisions to support local contractors and small businesses, safeguarding their participation against undue complexity or cost.
6. Mandate the annual procurement report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly, facilitating ongoing scrutiny and performance assessment.
7. Strengthen due diligence requirements for design, build and turnkey contracts in large-scale projects to ensure robust governance at every stage.

Each of these recommendations addresses practical challenges related to cost, transparency, opportunity, and accountability. Taken together, they would significantly reinforce the effectiveness of the proposed Bill.

Madam Speaker, I will now elaborate on each recommendation for the consideration of this Honourable House.

1. Elevate Procurement Thresholds to Meet Modern Realities.

Presently, the Act states that the procuring entity shall request a quotation from at least one supplier if the estimated value of the procurement contract does not exceed \$5,000. Or three suppliers if the estimated value of the procurement contract exceeds \$5,000 but does not exceed \$75,000. I think I heard the Premier spoke to some uplift, and I don't know if he's referring to the thresholds. Okay, so when he responds to me in his wrap-up, he'll give clarification on that.

So, Honourable Colleagues, it is clear that the Bill's existing procurement thresholds, for example, a fixed figure of \$5,000 when requesting a quotation from one supplier, yes, I know it is only one supplier, but have long since been outpaced by the economic realities we now face. Inflation and evolving market conditions have rendered these numbers, such as \$5,000, inadequate. I therefore urge this House to champion the raising of procurement thresholds across all tiers. Let us

empower our departments to work with greater agility and efficiency, cutting needless bureaucracy and ensuring that our processes reflect the true cost of doing business in Montserrat. By modernizing these limits, we not only streamline operations but also reaffirm our commitment to responsible stewardship and sound governance.

2. Strengthening Parliamentary and Cabinet Oversight. Madam Speaker, Procurement Boards are important, but elected officials must also have a clear oversight role in major public spending, especially on strategic projects. The Bill should require that significant contracts above a set value or related to national infrastructure be approved by Cabinet, which can only accept or reject contracts based on national interests, policy alignment, fiscal matters, or legal advice. These decisions should be recorded and reported to Parliament to ensure both institutional integrity and democratic accountability. Let us never lose sight of the foundation of democracy, people's right to demand transparency and accountability from those entrusted with public funds. While Procurement Boards are a vital purpose, ultimate accountability must rest with those elected by the people of Montserrat. It is essential that the Bill requires all significant contracts, those exceeding a defined threshold or touching on national infrastructure, to be subjected to Cabinet approval. Cabinet's role is not to meddle in technical evaluations, but to weigh these decisions in the balance of national interests, policy alignment, fiscal responsibility, and some legal guidance.

Additionally, let these decisions not be whispers behind closed doors. Such decisions should be formally recorded and reported to the Legislative Assembly for the country to see. In safeguarding both institutional integrity and democratic accountability, we affirm that public service is a trust and that the people of Montserrat are always its rightful guardians.

3. Establish a Protected Reporting Channel. I must highlight a persistent challenge within our procurement framework. Individuals, be they public officers, suppliers, or concerned citizens, often hesitate to report suspected irregularities for fear of reprisal or damage to their reputation. This silence undermines both the integrity and effectiveness of our public service. I therefore urge that the Bill formally provide for a confidential, legally protected avenue for reporting wrongdoing in procurement, such as a channel that would not promote early

intervention but would also reassure all stakeholders that their voices can be raised without fear. This is not about encouraging sensational whistleblowing. Let me repeat, this is not about encouraging sensational whistleblowing but about fortifying our system with responsible, protected reporting to ensure that transparency and accountability remain at the heart of public business.

4. Increase Transparency Around Contract Awards. Madam Speaker, I move now to address an issue that strikes at the very heart of public trust, the capacity that often surrounds our contract awards. Too frequently, skepticism and doubt thrive not due to any proven misconduct but because the public is left in the dark, unaware of who has won the contract and on what grounds or at what cost. I therefore recommend that, beyond simply advertising tender opportunities, this Bill requires that final decisions be made public. Let us ensure that the names of successful bidders, the contract values, and the reasons for selection are published openly and accessibly. This is especially vital in a small community as close-knit as ours, where perception can be as powerful as fact. By shining a light on the outcomes of our procurement processes, we can bolster public confidence and assure all Montserratians that fairness and merit guide our stewardship of public funds.

5. Our Local Suppliers and Small Businesses. Madam Speaker, I speak with conviction to champion the backbone of our economy, our local suppliers, our small contractors, our micro enterprises, energetic, ambitious and productive Montserratians who strive each day to build and serve our homeland. Too often, these pillars of our community face exclusion, hindered by convoluted registration processes and the daunting intricacies of procurement law. It is time for the Bill to boldly affirm what we all know to be true. Montserrat's future prosperity depends on unleashing the full potential of our local talent. I call upon this house to enshrine within the very fabric of our procurement law an explicit local empowerment clause. Let us direct the procurement authority to actively simplify requirements for small businesses through provisions, through provisional registrations, targeted outreach, and practical support. Presently, many local suppliers and contractors are locked out of the opportunity to benefit from large projects in Montserrat. Let us not merely open doors, but roll out the carpet for our own people. In doing so, we send a clear signal that Mont-

serratian enterprise is valued, welcome, and essential to our progress. Let the passage of this Bill echo with the promise of opportunity for every hard-working entrepreneur in our land.

6. Demand Parliamentary Oversight Through Mandatory Annual Reporting. Madam Speaker, as a principal voice, I assert that genuine accountability in procurement cannot thrive without full and regular scrutiny by the Legislative Assembly. It is not enough for oversight to rest solely with the executive. The people's representatives must have unimpeded sight of how public contracts are awarded and managed, especially in the wake of the port project fiasco. The Port project fiasco is a real example of the importance of this very point I'm making. Therefore, I call for this Bill to include a binding requirement that the procurement authority or the responsible minister must present an annual procurement report to the Legislative Assembly. This report should comprehensively detail all significant contracts, outline supplier participation and highlight trends in compliance and enforcement. Only through such transparent and systematic reporting can we as elected officials uphold the values of democratic oversight and ensure that public procurement truly serves the interests of Montserrat. Honourable colleagues, let us instruct, not merely suggest, that procurement data be laid before the House each year, empowering all parliamentarians to question, to challenge and to champion the highest standards of integrity in the stewardship of public funds.

7. Strengthen Safeguards for Design, Build, and Turnkey Contracts in Large-Scale Projects. Madam Speaker, the painful lesson of the Montserrat Port Project stands as a stark reminder. The complexities and risk of design, build and similar contracts, especially for major infrastructure, can leave the public exposed to unacceptable uncertainty, cost overruns and unfinished works. When a single contractor is entrusted with both design and construction, the lines of accountability sometimes have blur and loopholes widen. Most Honourable Colleagues, this Bill must go further in anticipating and closing those loopholes. I urge the inclusion of specific clauses that mandate enhanced due diligence, independent technical review at each project stage and milestone-based permits, with strict performance bonds for all design, build, and turnkey procurement. For projects above a defined threshold, especially those critical to national development, there should be a statutory requirement for external audits, transparent

publication of contract variations, and a formal mechanism for parliament to interrogate the project process and progress. Let us learn from the port project's costly interruption. Procurement arrangements must be as watertight as the infrastructure we seek to build. By codifying rigorous oversight, layered approvals and public transparency for high-value contracts, we can restore faith in major project works and ensure such failures are never repeated.

Madam Speaker, I do hope that my intervention will be included in the Bill going forward, and I now rest my case. Thank you for the opportunity to present this contribution.

Madam Speaker said:

Other Members of the House who wish to make an intervention can do so at any time now. It seems there are no others. Honourable Premier, are you ready to wrap up? I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his support and intervention, and when we go into committee stage, we can have a discussion on some of the points that he raised.

Madam Speaker said:

So, it has been moved and seconded that the ***Public Procurement Bill 2025*** be read a second time.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill will be read a second time.

The Clerk said:

Public Procurement Bill, No. 5 of 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

The Assembly will now go into committee to consider the Bill in further detail.

COMMITTEE STAGE

The Clerk said:

Clauses 1 to 5

Madam Chair said:

The question is that clauses 1 to 5 should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 1 to 5 now stand as part of the Bill.

The Clerk said:

Clauses 6 to 13

Madam Chair said:

The question is that clauses 6... Attorney General.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, Madam Speaker. I just have a few adjustments to clauses 10. Should I just start with each, mention each one individually, tell you what the adjustment is, and...

Madam Chair said:

Yes, go ahead.

The Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, clause 10, the section heading for clause 10, Government Procurement Service, an 'S' should be added to service, so it becomes "Government Procurement Services". Clause 10. Clause 10.1, rather.

That's on page 15. On page 16, clause 10, what you see as, what you have as clause 10, 5 and 6 re-number, so it's clauses 4 and 5. Sorry?

Madam Chair said:

Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Chair, I missed my turn, I must acknowledge. I was, but it's okay. I had a few concerns; perhaps the House can look at it with me and I'm guided. We have an initial term of up to five years, and maybe we'll point to a maximum of a further five, that's in clause 7. I find that extensive for a board to sit, although it says up to up to five. And also, please correct me if I'm off, that the appointment of the board is done simply by the FS. Does this come to Cabinet? I think I'm supporting the parliamentary democracy. This needs to come to Cabinet. There is no Ministerial input. We're in a parliamentary democracy, and I am not very, I'm not comfortable with this at all. I must say we did have an overview, and I welcome that, that the FS arranged, but as I delved in a little deeper, there were some concerns, and this is, without Parliament, Cabinet having a say in who, it's just excluding the executive oversight, and I'm uncomfortable with that happening. Cabinet needs to see. I see one is appointed by the Attorney General, three persons appointed by the Financial Secretary, and there's no role for Ministerial contribution. I'm not saying we have to continue. We have moved down a road where we actually advertise, and I'm not saying we have to, but a person gets an opportunity, and as well, Cabinet gets an input. A Bill as serious as this requires Parliamentary or Cabinet's input, Madam Speaker, and I find that term is too long. It's almost a term of a government, and God forbid that you put a board in place, and unless they do something that requires removal, you're forced to sit with that board, even though you may find that it is not in the interest of the best for the country, and so I have a serious concern with that, in terms of that. As well, I saw where, yes please, yes please, all right, to a shorter term, and that it be brought to Cabinet for approval.

Madam Chair said:

Could you just briefly sum up your amendment?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

At least two years, three? Three? Two years, three years, and the board must come to Cabinet for approval.

Madam Chair said:

So, the “three years” is at C1? Yes. Yes, go ahead.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Hi, good afternoon. Yes, I understand the Honourable Minister's position that there should be oversight by Cabinet in the process, but it's, when it comes to procurement, it's the international standard that ministers, there's no political interference at any level in the procurement process. Cabinet has, under the current regulations and the current Act, public procurement regulations; Cabinet has never, in the history of Montserrat, had any intervention in the establishment of the Procurement Board. It is not the international best practice, and that is what was considered when developing the Procurement Bill, to have any level of political interference in the procurement process. So, I just wanted to make that intervention.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, I just want to ask a question. Do you have any objection to the three years versus the five?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

So, it says up to, and if this Act was passed as is, the five-year term was established because it's very difficult to find members to serve on the Procurement Board. On most of the boards that we have in Montserrat, it was given leeway to allow persons to be retained, but it would be impractical to appoint anyone for five years. So, it was already established when this went to development that you would limit it to three years, with the possibility of extension. I have no strong objection to it being reduced to three years with the ability to serve another three years. I'm just explaining that the five years were because of the difficulty historically with finding members to serve on the Procurement Board. The criteria for the expertise that you have and

you need on a Procurement Board, you have the same persons always being called upon, and then you have fatigue of the process when you're trying to find replacement. But I have no strong objection to it being reduced to five years. Sorry, to three years.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Madam Speaker, I mean Chair, sorry Chair. I think you had asked if the five years referred to in terms of time to serve was under 7 (c) 1. I think 7 (c) 1 is referring to five years' experience in financing, management policy, and project experience. So, you may want to clarify where the five years'. Right.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, thanks. Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, I appreciate sorry, Madam Chair, I appreciate what the Honourable FS has said. Madam Speaker, oh dear.

The Honourable Premier said:

Sorry, could we deal with the three years, the five years matter first, so that we at least know whether or not we're moving forward?

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so the question is to make that adjustment at 7 (5) for the appointment for an initial term up to three years instead of five years.

The question was put

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, sorry, sorry, with that said, so we're changing the initial, the first reference to three years. So that means, are we also indicating that reappointment is for a maximum of a further three years? So, both references to three years, both references in clause 5 to five years, will now become references to three years. Thank you.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so the question is that clause 7 (5)....

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Speaker, Madam Chair, in light of what the FS would have said, I think while we're changing the initial rotation to three years, we should be, maximum term was 10 years before. I think we should consider change that to nine years so that someone can serve up to three terms. So that's just my suggestion, since the FS is saying that it's often hard to get people to serve on the boards. So, the first the rotation would be three years, which is the first one from five to three. Originally, it would have been 10 years because you'd have been able to serve two terms, but in light of what the FS is saying, I think we can change it to nine years so someone could serve up to three terms, which is, right, right. Right, just so you can get reappointed, right.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I support that because I know once people learn how procurement goes, you know, it takes some time, and it'd be good to have people with knowledge, and it's important. I agree.

Madam Chair said:

So, should this read that the I just want to be clear, other than the ex-officio member, a member of the Public Procurement Board is appointed for an initial term of up to three years and may be reappointed for a maximum of a further, further six years then. You would have to, if you're to, or two terms. So how do we want to word it? That seven, five?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay, so as I understand, Madam Chair, as I understand from the Honourable FS, so your initial term is three years and you're allowed another consecutive, another two consecutive three-year terms and that is it once. Yes, you may. So that is it once you've done those aggregates of six, six, three, six, nine years. Okay, okay. So, okay, so

we'll have to redraft it to take that into, and then I'll read, and then I'll just read out the redraft.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Sorry, Madam Chair, just in light of our small population and the ability to often find persons with certain expertise, we may want to include, maybe, a cooling-off period. And what I mean by a cooling-off period, like after the nine years, you've served nine years, maybe we should put in a period in which you cannot serve, but then you can come back after. So, you could put in, let's say, a cooling-off period of maybe five or six years, just as a suggestion. No, but you don't know, so.

Madam Chair said:

So, let us take it one at a time. Honourable AG, are you going to read the draft for us, please?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, I'm going to just redraft it quickly so that I can read it out for the House, or do we wish to look at another provision and then come back to it?

Madam Chair said:

Are we happy for that to take place? Yes, okay.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Grateful, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if the AG, the FS this time can assist me with 7 (2) (2). Is a person not in active practice and who

possess technical expertise in engineering, architecture, other similar or relevant technical field?

Madam Chair said:

Which one is that?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

We're still in 7, establishment and meetings of the Public Procurement Board.

Madam Chair said:

Right, and which one are you reading?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

7 (2) (c) (2).

Madam Chair said:

Oh, okay. And what is your concern?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Active practice, again, if you're talking about our pool, and not who possess technical, but who possess technical expertise in engineering, architecture, other similar or relevant technical field. I suspect that you figure that this would preclude maybe some of them from participating, if they're already in practice, because of the length of time they have to sit.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Yes, and again, because of the Madam Chair, because of the, again, this document was developed as much as possible to prevent conflicts of interest. So, when you have someone who is a practicing technician, you have the potential to have a conflict of interest. And as Members of this Honourable House would have pointed out earlier, perception is very important. So, if you have an engineer or someone who has an engineering company sitting on the Procurement Board

making the decisions on procurement matters, the perception could be that that person, even if they sign off the conflict of interest form that the perception could be that the person has other interests. We've normally gotten around that by appointing persons from within GoM, specifically from the Ministry of BUILTE, but you really don't want someone who is a practicing contractor or civil engineer, private sector mostly, to be sitting on the Public Procurement Board, going through bids and making decisions on contract awards. Hope that provides clarity. Nothing precludes in the current regulations or these regulations for persons to be from abroad and serve on the Procurement Board. We actually had an individual who was not living in, resident in Montserrat, serving on the Procurement Board up to recently. There's nothing that precludes diaspora individuals from serving on any boards in, well, the Procurement Board in Montserrat.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you. Suppose a person is in active practice but lives outside of our jurisdiction. How do we, how do? This would exclude them, would it? Is this restricted just to Montserrat or? Because I was looking at the pool, and I know a pool is limited, so hence my view about diaspora.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

The way the law is written currently, it would exclude anyone who's in active practice, whether you're from abroad or domiciled in Montserrat, but we should be, so if this is where, if anything, we should be able to correct that if the Honourable House so wishes and the AG can accommodate. And the Minister of Finance, who's responsible for the Bill, has no objection.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Minister.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Don't want to prolong this debate. But I really, to expand the gene pool, that we be careful with this, with this drafting, because if it says you cannot be in active practice, active practice locally, or... yeah, so.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, Honourable AG.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Because you work with procurement and you have the experience. I don't have that experience, so I am looking at it with a fresh pair of eyes and how I would want to see our country evolve, the involvement of professionals abroad, but who may be in active practice. Even in CARICOM, but they're not living here, if that is possible. But I also look at the practicality. I've never sat in tender opening. You might need everybody in the same room, etc. How do you set up your camera to facilitate? All of those factors must be considered. But I'm just sharing so that we don't limit ourselves when we can have others in the gene pool.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable AG, would you yield to the Minister, hear what she is saying, and then you can provide an explanation.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Madam Chair, I understand where the Member is going in terms of the pool of the person in the diaspora. However, the Financial Secretary can correct me, persons in the diaspora who are in active practice can bid for local jobs, which means they fall in the same pool as those who are local. So then...

The Financial Secretary said:

So, I concur. If you're going to adjust, it's not just to adjust for the diaspora. We'd have to adjust it so everyone is able to, because as the Honourable Member is saying, we do get a lot of bids from persons who live in the diaspora who may be working with a local company.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, so what I was going to say is something along the lines of what the Honourable Member was going to say. I think from my recollection of the procurement, the background discussion surround-

ing procurement from back since 2019, the view was that if you're going to be compiling a board, you want to ensure that these are persons who are not in some form or manner going to be able to bid on certain tenders that came before the board. And of course, we're supposed to have safeguards against conflict of interest and so forth. But this was just an additional measure. But, considering that we, and this was bearing in mind that generally we were initially thinking of local bidders, and we know the pool is small, but now that we've come far enough that we've acknowledged that tenders can be, persons outside of Montserrat can bid, and we don't, and in light of what the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Deputy Governor, Deputy Premier, my apologies, my apologies is saying, to say a person who is not in active practice does essentially narrow the pool of professionals that we can, we have access to. So, what it will ultimately take is proper monitoring on our part to ensure that persons who we have appointed to the board are not ultimately going to be able to bid and bypass safeguards that are supposed to be in place in accordance with the Act. With that said, and again, and I would, the Honourable Deputy Premier indicated it's just a question of whether we're willing to remove the words is a person not in active practice and just provide for, provide for the clause to state three persons appointed by the FS who possess technical experience in engineering, etc.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, Honourable FS.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Taking into account the discussion, and this has been useful, and the discussion I had with the AG and thinking about the difficulty we might have in getting someone who's not in active practice, I would support the removal of active practice with the caveat that the government procurement service once passed will do their due diligence when recommending appointments of a technical expert to the Procurement Board.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yeah. Yes, I was just asking if that's, if that's within your regulation, your procedure or somewhere. It would that be with something within

a regulation that you ask a person who may have a conflict of interest to, yeah, because what I'm saying, because you could be doing, you may not be, you may not be tendering, but you could be doing work for somebody else who tendering.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

It's in the Act and it's normally standard when during any Procurement Board meeting at myself and any Deputy Financial Secretary and all members of the Procurement Board and the procurement service must declare any conflict of interest on any tender or any procurement exercise that's ongoing. Again, as the Honourable AG would have pointed out, this was an additional safeguard. Now, if the House is willing and with the, because once we put it in law and we have in trouble, we're going to have some, sorry....

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Chair, I was just saying, this is the parent Act? Yes? So, in the regulations, you still have an opportunity to put in some safeguards to tighten up things because we don't have the regulations here because in some of the comments I had to share, but then I recognise that regulations were not in place yet in order because maybe they will not even be relevant because they can be embedded in the regulations themselves but that those are not before us. So, we can tighten things up a bit, but if we lock ourselves off in the parent Act, then we are forced to come back to amend the parent Act as opposed to put in a parent Act and regulations can be made to address whatever challenges or we made safeguards that we may want.

Madam Chair said:

So Honourable FS, how are we proposing to move forward with this?

The Honourable Premier said:

No, it's just a matter of deleting requirement of members not to be active in their profession, worded in the legal format.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

38 conflict of interest and 39 disclosure of interest in proclaimed proceeding. Thing is that it's already in here at 38 and 39, the safeguards that they're referring to. Just strengthening your point, yeah.

The Honourable Premier said:

We're not going to be perfect in any drafting of legislation, which is why we have legislative amendments. And once we can get through the significant aspects of difference, then let's do that. And then we can always come back with an amendment. Because if this does not pass through this committee, then we'll have to start the process all over again in September.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Is he recommending? Sorry, is he recommending? What are you recommending? Sorry, I missed that.

The Honourable Premier said:

Let's deal with the big outstanding issues and not seek to get perfection in the first go around.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Minister. No, no, no. Go ahead, Premier, go Premier. Parliamentary Secretary Buffonge wants to say something as well; his mic has been on.

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

We have to be mindful that we can't legislate for everything. We will be doing ourselves a disservice if we come back later and realize that, well, we shouldn't have put it there in the first place. I agree with the Premier. He's actually made the point. We can always come back with some minor amendments if we want to or need to. But be mindful not to put everything in the letter of the law. Thank you.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, I just want to state that I have no objection to removing it because, whether it's in or out, there is still an obligation to conduct due diligence to ensure, in one case, that the person is not in active practice or, in the other case, that the person is in active practice. So, the due diligence aspect of it is something you cannot avoid. The conflict of interest aspect is something that a potential member cannot avoid. And there is, I think, in the regulations, there's a conflict of interest declaration. So, you know, the duty is on you to ensure that if you are chosen, selected, you fall within the requirements of the provision. So, like I said, I don't mind removing it.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

My final point on this, Madam Chair, I will go ahead. I would suggest the removal of not in active practice for another simple reason. The Act speaks to the Financial Secretary being able to appoint three persons who have at least five years of experience in finance, senior management, policy, or project development. But this one doesn't, this criteria doesn't say that those persons don't need to be in active practice. The same as the appointment of the Attorney General's nominees. So, we are differentiating the engineers and the other technical experts, but allowing the persons who are experienced in banking and finance. So as the AG is saying, if we have due diligence procedures to manage the conflict of interest for the Honourable Attorney General's nominee, as well as the other nominees under the Financial Secretary's purview to appoint, and they don't have that clause to not be in active practice, I think we should be comfortable enough at this point to extend it to the technical expertise experts and just ensure that the due diligence and conflict of interest procedures are robust and in place. Meaning equality for all of the nominees.

Madam Chair said:

Okay. So, you're suggesting removing that statement in the clause. Okay. So, let's just look at this question, then. Clause 7 (2) (c) (2) that it reads, *the person who possesses technical expertise in engineering, architecture, or other similar or relevant technical field.*

All those in favor of that amendment?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Apologies, Madam Chair, just to indicate that we're moving from “is” to “possesses”, because “possesses” now becomes, who “possess”. “Who possess”. So, it's “three persons appointed by the Financial Secretary who possess”. Yes. Should I read out the entire?

Madam Chair said:

Yes, go ahead.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay, great. Okay, so (c), *“three persons appointed by the Financial Secretary who possess technical expertise in engineering, architecture, or other similar or relevant technical field.”*

Madam Chair said:

Are we all in favour of that adjustment? Okay, so I think that adjustment will be made accordingly. And the next one we had was 7 (5)?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Could you read that for us, please?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, the adjusted provision now provides as follows: “Other than the ex officio member, a member of the Public Procurement Board is appointed for an initial term of up to [three years] and may be reappointed for a maximum of [two consecutive terms of up to three years in each term]”. So, we had to make it; that's the end of the provision. So, we had to make it clear that first there's a three-term period and then you have two other terms, consecutive, they follow each other, and for each of those two other three-year terms, you can be appointed for up to those three years, or less, of course.

Madam Chair said:

Are there any other interventions under any clause between seven and 13?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

One more, Madam Chair. In clause 11, 11 (1) (b), immediately before conditions, immediately after conditions of, insert the word “section”. So, it becomes section 7 (2) (c).

Madam Chair said:

Okay, that's it. So, the question is that clauses 7 to 13, as amended, should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 7 to 13 now stand part of the Bill.

The Clerk said

Clauses 14 to 21.

Madam Chair said:

The question is that clauses 14 to 21 should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 14 to 21 now stand as part of the Bill.

The Clerk said

Clauses 22 to 29.

Madam Chair said:

Question is that clauses 20... Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, clause 22 (4), the procedure for each, after each delete the word “of”, so it reads, “The procedure for each method under subsection one shall be as prescribed”. Delete the word, sorry, for 22 (4), delete “of”.

Madam Chair said:

That's it, any other?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

In clause 23, subclause 6, “in a case of open tendering in accordance with sub regulation”, delete “sub regulation” and insert “subsection”. Okay. In 23 (8), add the “s” to “services”. “With the approval of the Government Procurement [Services]”.

Madam Chair said:

Any other?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Was clause 26, is clause 26 included in?

Madam Chair said:

Yes.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, in clause 26, in the chapeau, that's the first paragraph, “A procuring entity may engage in procurement by means of a request for quotations for the procurement of a”, delete the word, letter “A”. So, “it's for the procurement of goods, works, or services where”. Okay, should I repeat, should I repeat it? Okay. Take out the “A” after “of”, the end of the second sentence. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

That's it. Okay, so the question is that clauses 22 through to 29 as amended....How long is this going to take?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

My apologies. That is with direct contracting and emergencies, etc. Given that in these recent times, where we are seeing, because I don't want us to have our act in place, and then we are scrambling to seek waivers. Given where we are seeing more often that monies may become available for projects and the limited time span, for the advancement of the country, in the best interest of the country, is it necessary to carve out a special section for that? Premier was saying we can do direct, direct tendering, but I don't want us to be in a bind where we are saying when it's not in our legislation that we want to create that arrangement. I want it to be carved out. Given what I'm seeing with the projects that are coming, monies are coming, and we know that there are certain constraints, but we are going to you now to ask you to waive, to waive, to waive. Can we avoid that, recognizing what is operating, and create a clause that allows that? Because I don't think we can create that in the regulations.

The Honourable Premier said:

27 (c), “Where owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency”, so in the event where some of the things which we are talking about that's an extreme urgency, then you can use 27 (c) to deal with those extreme urgencies.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes, but they may not, it's this interpretation, a public emergency to me is COVID and hurricane, but I get some good money to spend, and because we are in this framework...

The Honourable Premier said:

It says, including in the event of a declared public emergency. Sorry, it's “owing to circumstances of extreme urgency, including declared public emergencies”. So, “urgency”, you have money to spend, you need to get it out there, that's an urgency, and you can use clause C to deal with that urgency.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

All right. FS.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Parliamentary Secretary.

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

I was saying in those very same cases, all these exigent circumstances that we put here for us to get through them, who determines what's suited? So, Ms. Dorsette, sorry, Minister Dorsette might say, Okay, I want my money spent, but somebody with finance? Is it the board? Is it, who would determine that?

Madam Chair said:

FS, you want to answer that? So, you want to say something, Honourable Minister?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes, we must be cognizant of the environment in which we are operating, alright? And perhaps sometimes, as a minister, not that we don't align on our thinking to move the country forward, but I don't want to be going to the FS to ask the FS, please waive this, waive that. We recognise the relationship that's emerging with us, recognise monies will come in quickly and need to be spent, but our framework does not allow that. Again, it's interpretation. Who interprets this? What I would wish to see, where possible, because it cannot go into regulations, I believe. Carve it out now. I don't want to be begging FS to waive and going to this group and that group. I'm being realistic based on what I see operating now. I do not want that to continue, and I feel very strongly about that. I want it to be clear-cut that we have carved it, and this is what this means, that an interpretation later on. And if we have to determine, well, who determines that? Well, who is it going to be? I don't want it to be left again to the FS to make that determination either. And this is, and when I say FS, not you, the person, but whomever the FS is, take it out that, or make it clear that in circumstances where we have this, this is what, and that it's not lumped,

and I'm told no waiver, and we can't waive, and we have our procurement rules, and we have our framework. We must do what we can to advance our possibilities and opportunities, not create something that is a weapon for us. I don't believe in that, especially when you could see it.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare, said:

Madam Chair, it's also relative.

Madam Chair said:

That's all you were saying?

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Yeah, basically.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, because Minister Osborne had his mic....

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

No, I wanted to see if I can add some clarity to the section, because we're wondering who makes the decision. But the heading for this section is direct contracting, and the first part of the section says a procuring entity may award a public contract by direct contracting where any of the following apply. And if you scroll back up to the top for the definition of what a procuring entity is, it says a department or a Ministry. So, for me, this is basically giving the department or the Ministry the, well, Mrs. Hector is saying no, but that's what this is saying.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

No, because you come back down to the other clause that said the Procurement board can tell them no. The Ministry brings its case, all right, I have to be careful, ain't it? When the Ministry brings its case and say, listen, we want this to happen, we want to advance this, then FS or, the Procurement Board, not FS really, the Procurement Board could say, no, you do not fall within. This is what this means. There has to be an interpretation of it, and that interpretation is relative. I am

speaking from present experience. I don't want to be begging anybody for any waiver, and they're saying this is the framework, and Britain's supposed to know this. When we get money, I want it spent in the country and advance this country. Hence why I am very strong on it. I do not want the Procurement Board to be put in that position because you as a Ministry we may determine this is where we want to go based on what we have but the Procurement Board can tell us no.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS

Madam Chair, does clause C not simply mean Department and Ministries under extreme circumstances where there is an urgency or where there are time constraints that we can bypass these procurement rules and get on with the hiring or the purchasing?

Madam Chair said:

Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, I just want to say that we have to recognise that the procurement rules are in place to ensure transparency, accountability, that a proper process is followed when seeking to acquire goods or services. Now, fine, we have exemptions and we have direct contracting, but let's look at those as the exception to what should be the standard. So, for example, when it's mentioned that, you know, you have monies that you need to spend urgently, questions need to be asked as to when did you get those monies? What caused you to be in a situation where you're trying to rush, for lack of a better word, to spend those monies? And that differs from a situation where, for example, something has happened and we desperately in Montserrat need goods and services. Now, that is catered to under direct contracting, but if we are going to take a transparent approach to spending funds that we receive, it means that there needs to be a proper process to allow for it to be received in time. As a matter of fact, if we're receiving funds, we would have already had to advance a case to say what we're going to spend it on. We would have already had to address our minds to things such as tenders to secure persons who are competent to carry out those tasks. So, I think ultimately in those instances, the duty is on us to ensure that we've done what we need to

do, the background work, so that those funds, it's not something that we're trying to bypass rules for accountability and transparency to utilize monies received in that manner. Like I said, it differs to where we need goods and services urgently. So, C is addressing a situation where something happens and we definitely need goods and services urgently, and we cannot rely on the usual or the other procurement methods such as open tendering.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

So, sorry, Madam Chair, I've been silent, but one, I think C is adequate, because then the process by which you trigger C can be expounded on in the regulations in terms of the who does what, who approves what. And I just want to clarify, the FS under the current regulations does not have the authority to waive, nor do ministries beg the FS. The FS, in agreement with the procuring entity, meaning the accounting officer, must agree that this hits the threshold for emergency. So, it's always checks and balances, even on the Financial Secretary. So, the Financial Secretary, whoever he or she is, cannot simply say waive the procurement rules. That has to be in agreement with the procuring entity, and as the current Financial Secretary, it is not encouraged by any Ministry, whether the timeline is short, to waive the procurement rules unless it's absolutely necessary. We are dealing with public funds, and even our donor partners, when they are signing funds, must understand that when they assign funds to us, that we have a public procurement process that we must adhere to. So, when it comes to timeline, because of the short notice of monies, there has to be a strong case for when you waive the procurement rules. It cannot be the norm, and that is why there are exceptions, and that is why you have checks and balances in place when it comes to waiving of the procurement rules. It shouldn't be up to a Ministry or a single individual to determine when the procurement rules are waived. I believe clause 27 (c), when it's expounded in the regulations, should have, again, who triggers it, how it's triggered, and that will be determined in the regulations. But I think right now, the clause fits what the Honourable Minister's, Deputy Premier's expectations are. But I would not go any further in allowing too much latitude in determining this is an emergency. We've all worked in government at some point, well, most of us. There's always a need to spend money quickly, and we don't want to encourage, well, the Financial Secretary does not want to en-

courage accounting officers to be always able to say, well, we have only six months to spend a sum of money, so we need to waive the procurement rules, and the Act allows us to do so, because if we don't spend by the end of March, the monies are lost. That cannot be an exemption.

Madam Chair said:

So, Honourable Minister, do you want to make a...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

You're talking to me, ma'am?

Madam Chair said:

Yes, I was. I was asking if you want to suggest an amendment, and we put it to the vote.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam, if you wish to put it to the vote, what I'm saying, I am not in any way, I am Miss Governance, I am Miss Integrity. Yes, I am, and I'm very strong on it. I'm not asking to curtail anything. What I'm saying, in the interest of the progress of this country, you look at the environment in which you're operating, so we are creating a framework. The necessary checks and balances would still be in the framework, but I do not, like FS is saying, want us to come to operate outside that framework. Since we are now creating that framework, let us address the challenges that we have seen arising. FS has assured me that this can be addressed in the regulations, and when I'm talking about that type of project, I am not talking about a project where the entity has had that money sitting around there and now waiting to come, or did not advance what they were supposed to advance. I am saying monies have become available, and which can be of substantial benefit to the progress and advancement of this country, but the framework that we have precludes us from taking full advantage of it because of how it is drafted. We draft the framework, recognising in what environment we are working, and we put in the necessary checks and balances at the same time. I just want to know that that preparation is made for that arrangement, and it is clear. We speak always of shelf-ready projects,

ready-shelf this. Let us be ready with our framework when that opportunity arises, and that we do not miss opportunities that can advance this country.

The Honourable Premier said:

Do you have a proposal?

Madam Chair said:

No, it's my question.

The Honourable Premier said:

Bear with me. We're talking around an issue. C provides an avenue. Do you have an alternative proposal to put forward?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

What I'm saying is that the Honourable FS has shared with me we can fill that out in the regulations, and given that, I am prepared to work that when the regulations come through, because they have to pass through Cabinet, I may be outvoted, yes, but at least we can. I do not want to see missed opportunities given. Now, Montserrat is not the place where I can run down the road or anybody and pick up this, pick up that. By the time you have to ship, by the time you have to order, not at all excluding checks and balances, but we have to look at the environment that we're working in and progress this country forward. Again, I understand the Minister is saying this is a tool, but in this case, they're weapons for me.

Madam Chair said:

So, I gather from what you're saying that you're happy to go along with this and let the regulations take care of it. Yes, Honourable FS.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Sorry, so just to point out, because I don't want to be misrepresented. The regulations will only will be bound by what the Act prescribes. I know the Honourable Members know this. So, when we talk about the waiver, which exists currently in our regulations, it will still be bound

within emergent situations. So, whatever we're effecting, the waiver, however the process is developed, will only be if we're in emergent circumstances. What, whether it's triggered by the constitution or some other provision, or some other thing that is considered an emergency.

The Honourable Premier said:

Alright, FS, (c) speaks to urgency. And. Okay, so let's not link urgent with emergency. It's urgent or an emergency. So, the point you're making there sort of speaks to it as though it's only on the emergency situation. So, we need to, we need to ensure that we're not getting that wrong.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Can I just read out the section for a clear understanding? And what I'm going to do is, because I'm going to leave out the part that says including a public emergency, because I think that may be creating some confusion as to how wide the section may be. So, if I exclude that part, maybe it will create a clear understanding. So....

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Romeo had his mic on.

The Honourable Premier said:

Instead of putting "including or in the event of a public emergency". Okay. "Extreme urgency [or] in the event of declared public emergencies".

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, so when you use extreme urgency, it was intended to say that a public emergency under the constitution can be an, it can be an event of or circumstance of extreme urgency. So, it's not meant to limit it to that. But when we say, okay, so if I say, oh, there's an extreme or a circumstance of extreme urgency, someone can say, for example, oh, there's a public emergency. A public emergency has been declared under the Constitution. So that falls in that, but it's not limited to only those scenarios. The public emergency. I think that is where the con-

fusion may have arisen. Right, right, right. So, what I was going to do was to exclude the example there so we're clear as to what the provision covers. So, it says "Where owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency resulting from an unforeseeable event, not attributable to the procuring entity, there is an urgent need for goods, services, or works and it is impractical to use another method of procurement due to time constraints". Now, for example, if a public emergency is declared under the constitution, it fits squarely within C. We give examples so that you have an idea as to what can be captured by such a provision.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Romeo had his mic on before.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I was only asking whether, after regulations are formed, whether they would come back. Do we, I just, I want to be clear that people are not suggesting that. I just want to be clear. Okay, good.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Buffonge.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

I'm just saying that an urgency and an emergency are two different things. And where it speaks to resulting from an unforeseeable event is referring to the public emergency and not to a circumstance of extreme urgency. So, owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency, which could be any number of things, separate and apart from the fact that you can also have a declared public emergency due to an unforeseeable event, I just think they're two completely separate things. And I don't, I don't think it's fair to merge them under the umbrella of if an unforeseeable event happens, because that's referring to the emergency. So, there are circumstances in which something is extremely urgent, but COVID hasn't happened. The volcano hasn't blown. There's no specific event. I just wanted to clarify the difference.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, Honourable FS.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding of the provision was that it was separate. There was urgency, which would have to be defined in, you know, of what that can look like, and emergency as prescribed under the Constitution Act, for example, where the Governor in Council declares a state of emergency and therefore you can waive the procurement regulations. That is different in a state of urgency, like what happened with the waste management project, where that was urgent and therefore you were able to effect a waiver. So again, the current regulations allow us for emergency and urgency. Embedded it in the Act, but we will prescribe the steps in the regulation that manages the triggering of the clause in the regulation. Okay.

The Honourable Premier said:

FS, we're digging ourselves into a hole unnecessarily. Section C, "where owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency [or] in the event of declared public emergencies." Okay. So, an extreme urgency does not have to be a cataclysmic event. It does not have to be a public emergency. It's an urgency. No, but you're talking, when, when you spoke a while ago, you brought it back around to, to public emergency. So if we're going to get ourselves caught up in that, let us create a clause C. "Where owing to circumstances of extreme urgency or" clause D "in the event of declared public emergencies" as clause D. So that we now don't feel that the extreme emergency is as a consequence of public emergency.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, I don't think it's a, okay, so there's an extreme emergency, and we have this rule in drafting where, so we give you an example, including a public emergency. So, things of that nature are going to amount to a, what's the term, a circumstance, circumstance of extreme urgency. So, when you hear the circumstance of extreme urgency, you think of public emergency and things of that nature. So is it that you're saying you don't want to have circumstance of extreme emergency be interpreted so as to be confined to things of that nature, and things of that, by things of that nature, I mean a public emergency under the Montserrat Constitution order.

The Honourable Premier said:

I want urgency to be understood as urgent and public emergency. There's urgency as a consequence of public emergency. That's one. And there's urgency as a consequence of other factors. So, therefore, if this is going to create a problem, let's use, let's have, "Where owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency", that's clause C. Clause D, "or in the event of declared public emergencies", clause D with consequential amendments. So at least we don't end up have linking public emergencies and extreme urgency.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay. So, if we're to take out, "including in the event", it would be "owing to a circumstance of extreme urgency resulting from an unforeseeable event", etc. That is what is being proposed.

The Honourable Premier said:

I'm no lawyer. Bear with me. If we just stick to urgency without going through all of that detail, then we will determine what is urgent at the level of the Procurement Board and the regulations. And when you now end up with a public emergency, then that is covered under a separate clause. But let them stand on their own in the abundance of caution.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

My only issue with that is we're going to leave urgency on its own. Do you want "urgency" or "extreme urgency?" I should ask that first. Okay. If you're going to leave that on its own without including the public, if you're going to leave that on its own and we're taking out including a public emergency to guide as to what it may entail we're going to need to know or have it enshrined in legislation or what, or some guidelines as to what is anticipated by a circumstance of urgency, because we can easily fall into the trap where a procuring entity may apply their own interpretation and it becomes risky. That is the fear.

The Honourable Premier said:

The interpretation will interpret what urgency is. In other words, you'll define extreme urgency or urgency, whichever phrase you want to use in your definition.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay. So, are we proposing that it be defined in the Act? Because suggestions would be needed as to what is...

The Honourable Premier said:

If it can go in the regulations, it would be simpler.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

I think I'd feel more comfortable if it were defined in the Act. Sorry.

The Honourable Premier said:

Okay. So, let's define it in the Act, but I'm insisting that it is not included as part of public emergencies.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

I can live with that, but I think in order to guide the regulations, you have to define it.

The Honourable Premier said:

I have absolutely no problem with the definition, but I don't want the confusion to be there, as that extreme urgency means public emergency.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

I'm agreeing with you, Honourable Premier.

Madam Chair said:

Go ahead, Honourable Minister.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

I appreciate what has been said. A parent Act can be... And I'm not pleased. I want to make it clear. Let me make the preamble. I am not trying in any way to circumvent transparency, integrity, etc. Not at all. But we must be practical in the Montserrat situation, where we need things. We can't run down by Osborne or go here or go there. We are not special in the macroeconomics of the world. We are small fish when we get there. We make our orders. They tell us, no, no, we don't have no time with you. And we're waiting for all sorts of things. I want it to be clearly outlined that this... And we build it in the regulations where we have time and we can go through it. Now, as Premier said, we want to get this Bill. The Bill can be amended later if we want, but I'm not prepared to circumvent... Not circumvent. I'm not prepared to constrict us. I am in government five years plus, and I've seen the challenges in advancing this country. I am not going around the proverbial mountain for another 10 years, and there's no substantive progress because we have a framework that constrains us. Our framework must be based on integrity and transparency, but it also must be built on our reality. And that is why that we're very strong. It may be okay for other countries. We're very strong about the exclusion of parliamentary democracy in this piece of legislation. No ministerial input. Ministers are not less honest than other public servants. And it is being portrayed that the only person who have no integrity, no good governance is in political influence. Political is not political interference. But we must know what we want for our people, where we want this country to go, and it must not be left to technicians only. And I feel very strongly and passionate about it because I have seen coming into government where we have good plans, strong ideas, strong projects, and what happened to them. They fall by the way because of the very weapons we have created for ourselves. We don't live in London. We don't live in America. And some of these constrictions we have, they don't appear in the United Kingdom. The commissioners have their say, and we elected representatives, elected by the people, and we are constrained. I am not prepared to be constrained or to give my constitutional power to any technician. United Kingdom don't have no constitution. We have a constitution. And so, our reality and political framework must be distinguished from those other countries.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Minister of Health.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

I think we're all agreeing to the same thing. We've clearly separated “extreme urgency” from a “declared public emergency”. Honourable Premier wants to turn it into two separate fairly identical clauses, where in C it talks about “extreme urgency”, and in D it specifically refers to a “declared public emergency”. And then the AG wants to clearly define in the Act what an extreme urgent situation is. So, I think we're all on the same page.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Just for clarification, I want to put it out that I'm fine with the clause as is. Now, if the proposal is to remove the reference to a “public emergency under the Montserrat Constitution Order”, I am of the view that the remainder of the...

The Honourable Premier said:

We are not saying... We're not talking about the “public emergency”. We're just simply saying the urgency is not as a consequence of a public emergency. There's urgency, and there's public emergency. So, if we need to clarify them, have C as “urgency” and D as “emergency”.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

But I understand that separating the two. But when we get back to urgency, extreme urgency, it's that I don't feel comfortable leaving it open and defining it can present a challenge. Because even if you define it, you need to limit it somehow. I mentioned before that it creates problems when it comes to an open interpretation, and there are no guidelines as to what can amount to an urgency. You have the situation where... And we do have various procuring entities where varying interpretations can be applied, and that is not something you want.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Leader.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes. If I could... If I could ask a question because I'm sensing something here. What was the intention in the first place when this was drafted? Why whoever put in of extreme urgency? Because we already know about declared public emergency. That was a given from long time. So, what was the intention? What was somebody trying to do here when it included "of extreme urgency"? What was the intention?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

So currently under the current Act, because this happened over the last year with the wastewater project, where that was declared as a public emergency under the constitution, but it was deemed by Cabinet to be emergent. And that was an extremely urgent situation. Under the current regulations, the accounting officer of the procuring entity and the Financial Secretary have to agree and sign off that the procurement regulations can be waived due to the emergent, the urgent situation. But it was not declared as a public emergency. So, this is just, I think it's just reflecting that. So that's where that came from. So, we've moved to the point where we've agreed to the separation. The public emergency as defined by the constitution is clear. What the AG is asking, and I have to agree, is that you have to bind extreme urgency by some definition. Because what is extreme urgency?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

But you just said, you just said you had an example and that triggered this being placed here. And you stated the method by which you determine it. If I don't recall clearly, you said the Accounting Officer of the...

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

The Accounting Officer of the procuring entity and the Financial Secretary have to agree and sign off on the waiver of the procurement regulations.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

That's in regulation somewhere. So then do we have a problem now? No, I'm asking, do we have a problem outside having a definition?

Now, I hear his explanation. Do we have a problem? Or, let me ask do we still insist on a definition for extreme urgency, given what he just said?

The Honourable Premier said:

May I just ask a question, Chair?

Madam Chair said:

There's a question up here.

The Honourable Premier said:

Yeah, could we have your attention. It's the hurricane season. We don't have a D8, but we may need a D8 as a consequence of the hurricane season coming up. So, it's not an emergency. It's not an emergency, but it's an urgent situation that we have the D8 ready in the event of a hurricane coming. So, you're not declaring a public emergency, but you know, look, I need to get the D8 up and going. Okay. So, which is why I'm saying, let us be simple with it and just separate one from the other so that it avoids the confusion which we're having here.

Madam Chair said:

Yeah, that's what he has been saying.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

It seems like it's just a matter of getting them separate, because you already stated the method by which you could determine that it is urgent.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

In the current regulations. That's in the current regulations.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

And the current regulation will still be part of this?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

No, regulations have to be revised.

The Honourable Premier said:

In revising the current regulations, why can't we also include this in the current regulations? Sorry, in the revised regulations. It's there already. No, I just need to get a little attention first. In the current regulations, you're saying it is provided for. So, what is the cause why we can't have it in the new regulations?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Sorry, Honourable Premier. I was fine with it. It's the Honourable Deputy Premier who wanted it prescribed the process prescribed in the legislation. She would have indicated weapons and so....

The Honourable Premier said:

We've gone beyond that and agreed let's put it in the regulations and move on.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

The AG has asked for a definition and that's where we're stuck.

Madam Chair said:

If I may intervene here, I think the House has been indicating what they want and therefore we need to just decide what happens and move on because we've been going around in circles and we don't seem to be getting anywhere.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

To be clear is not what I want, it's using, you know, my legal knowledge to put my view out there but of course Madam Chair. I'll be guided by the House.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, so let me put the question to the Members, are we happy to separate this section as was suggested by the Honourable Premier to have it split in two?

The question was put.

The Honourable Premier said:

With a consequential amendment to the numbering.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, to the numbering, the numbering would have to be adjusted as well. Say that again... The question before us is a whether... so you're the one who raised this, do you want to recommend?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

So, what I'm recommending, okay, as Premier has indicated, and I am going, I had a whole book to deliver this afternoon, but I am saying we have agreed that it is so, and we can go further now to say as prescribed in the regulation. Regulation gives us more flexibility to grow and develop our legislation. There is already an existing arrangement. We can bring that over, we can add to that, we can subtract, and that's all I'm saying. There is no need to put when you put things in the parent Act, the challenge is all right, and in this situation, I'm not in any way saying not to prescribe it in law, but do it in the regulations. Premier already agreed we can share that before we approve by Cabinet with the Opposition, and we can all come back together as a House and look at these regulations. That's all I'm saying.

Madam Chair said:

Okay. Thank you.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Chair, just a quick observation, had it not been July and we didn't have another Assembly, we could have come back next Assembly and fix it, but technically it still can be done. Whatever we decide today, I know it's a matter of time for drafters to come with the right phrasing and not just that there may be an example that is there

somewhere. So, in any event, what I'm willing to come up after we decide whatever here....

Madam Chair said:

They would have to come back from right over.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Yeah, well, whatever, it just means another amendment and a month, and the next day we fix it next month. We fix it if necessary, if necessary.

The Honourable Premier said:

No, if that's the case, the Bill has to have a first reading. We need to be in a position at this stage. There are also some other factors within the Bill that are important. I think the Honourable Lewis asked the question about the 5,000. The 5,000 has been upgraded to 15,000, and the 75,000 has been upgraded to 150,000.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Sorry, those in the Bill or regulations, because I was hearing that the regulations that stand will be upgraded. So that's in the upgrading of regulations.

The Honourable Premier said:

Yeah, those will be in the regulations.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Honourable Premier, please bear in mind what I'm saying. I'm saying in any event, whatever we do today. It can be corrected again. That's all I'm saying.

Madam Chair said:

So, finally, finally, the question is, are we prepared to separate this section into two? Okay, so that is what we will do, we'll make that ad-

justment. Are there any other changes or amendments in the clauses that were called?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

We did agree. We agreed to separate it into two. I don't know if I don't know if there is any, if anybody's mindful of taking them into consideration, as prescribed in the regulations. Can I get your attention, Madam Deputy Premier? What I was saying, I think we agree. I think we agree to the separation... we agree to the separation. What I was asking is if your proposal as prescribing regulation is also taking into account as to what we are voting on. I don't know.

Madam Chair said:

Yes. Because she did indicate that, so separate it into two and that as prescribed in the regulation, and the vote is yeah or nay? Any nays? So that is what we'll do, we'll make those amendments.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, so...no, no, I'm just reading it out properly so we have its lettered a, b, c. So, C is now where owing to, so C, we're going to drop "where" so C is now going to be "Owing to a circumstance of extreme" ... are we dropping "extreme"? So, "Owing to a circumstance of extreme emergency urgency", sorry "urgency", and then you have the comma as prescribed in the regulation semicolon, correct and should I reread it? Okay, D is now going to be "in the event of declared public emergencies under the Montserrat Constitution order" semicolon, and we're deleting the rest of the remainder of the provision.

Madam Chair said:

From "resulting"?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, after the comma at the end of the word "order," we delete the comma, replace it with a semicolon and delete everything else after that.

Madam Chair said:

Members, that's what we're agreeing? Okay, so we have and the re-numbering yes as well.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so the question is that clauses 22 to 29 with those amendments should form part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 22 to 29 as amended form parts...

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Chair, we have to adjust the original D accordingly as E and F.

Madam Chair said:

Say that again?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

What was D before will now have to come to E.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, I said with the renumbering.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Oh, okay, sorry, I missed that. I missed that. I missed that.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, so the I's have it and clauses 22 to 29 as amended now stand as part of the Bill.

The Clerk said:

Clauses 30 to 40

Madam Chair said:

Question is that clauses 30 to 40 should stand as part of the Bill. Yes, Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair clause 40 (5) that is on page 38. In sub clause 5, and the end of line 4 were deleting the comma after "criminal laws" and inserting the word "and". Page 38 sub clause 5... in line 4 at the end of the line 4 after the phrase "criminal laws", delete the comma and insert "and". So, it should be "under the applicable criminal laws [and] public service law", correct. Madam Chair in clause 42

Madam Chair said:

No, we did not go onto 42.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

We're not at 42? Okay, my Apologies.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, just an intervention, under part 8 "transparency" is incorrectly spelled so we need to correct that as well with an e, e n c y.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it's on page 35.

Madam Chair said:

And that would be in the table of contents as well. It's just to correct the spelling in "transparency". So, the question is that clauses 30... Yes, Honourable Minister.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

I miss my turn, but I ask for your indulgence just for clarity. The disclosure of interest in procurement proceedings, especially where we are speaking strongly...

Madam Chair said:

Where is that, clause 39?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Clause 39. There's 39 not page I do section. Okay, section 39 (2), "*A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee or Evaluation shall not without the approval of the chairperson vote on a matter in which he declares a conflict of interest or have their vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the chairperson*". Give me an example to elucidate my understanding of where I would allow a person of declare the interest of a conflict of interest to participate in procurement proceedings. Because this here to me clouds integrity, but like I said, I have never participated in a procurement proceeding, so justify this clause here for me in view of this robust transparency and integrity that we want to establish under this framework. You have already declared a conflict of interest, and if you voted... tell me what conflict of interest... pardon... yes, so, I need to understand this where we want a robust framework of transparency and integrity because I can't understand. As soon as this happens you have to recuse yourself once it is established. Right, if it is unfounded then that is something else, but you are declaring it. So, tell me what circumstances will allow that.

Madam Chair said:

Do we have a response to that?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Response AG? Why the chairman could still allow somebody who has a conflict? Or FS.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

It depends on the level of conflict, you should always declare a conflict of interest but if I worked for a... if a company that bids in to tile a floor and I worked for that company 15 years ago. You need to declare that you work for that company 15 years ago, but you would have you would have left that company's employment, you have to declare that that that interest that you did work for this company even as five or six years ago. Yes, but does that not necessarily preclude you from voting in the matter, you leave it to the to again yes, So you have conflicts of interest where if okay, if my brother is the owner of that company, obviously, I have to recuse myself from voting, but if you once had an interest in that company years ago through family working, the Chair should be able to determine whether or not that conflict of interest is strong enough from you being impartial to vote that was the rationale behind that conflict.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I think we have to be careful

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I think we kind of getting in trouble with words. You can't be saying it's a conflict of interest and then say you could allow it. If 15 years ago you determine it's not sufficient to warrant being called a conflict of interest then it's not a conflict of interest.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

But then if you are awarded and then someone says well did this person declare that they worked for this company 15...

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

So, they declare it, but then you could defend it and you could say well, it's 15 years ago.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

But so why not pre-empt that and just declare it, put up your hand in the room that you have a potential conflict of interest or conflict interest and the Chair made the determination if that is still relevant.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

You say you have a potential conflict of interest not that you have a conflict of interest, two different things.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Okay, so let's forget potential. You have a conflict of interest because you had you have a history with this particular entity.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

So, you may not be considered a conflict of interest if the history is a long time ago. So, you declare that your involvement is for people to determine whether it's a conflict of interest, yes.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Leave it to the Chair to determine whether the conflict is relevant enough to...

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

So, you declare your involvement and then the Chair determines if it's a conflict of interest sufficient.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Are we saying when you read it like this, when you read it in this way without you, remember you're not there to explain to anyone but it says where the Chair determined that a conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances then ABC as you have would follow but let it be clear that where the Chair determined that it was not an operating

conflict of interest all because I might come and say thinking but then the Chair in the circumstances can declare that it does not fit the.... or an operating conflict of interest in these circumstances, right. To stand like that, it doesn't look...it doesn't speak to integrity. I understand what you're saying. The Chair determines that the conflict does not operate in the circumstances, then...

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

That's a whole section that we'd have to amend. What are we amending it to?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

If they vote against the approval of the Chairperson, where the Chair determined that the conflict of interest does... that the conflict of interest does not operate. Right, so I am saying I have worked with the bottle company 10 years ago because I see it as a conflict, the Chair says it's ten years ago under our regulations that doesn't is not considered. So, the Chair rules this is not considered a conflict of interest and therefore we can continue to sit or the ruling would not be thrown out or the decision because the Chair has looked at it and determine. So, when it's there in the in the legislation whoever picks it up can see that it is interrogated and you have come to that decision so we can put it at the end.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Sorry, so “A” remains the same, and then “B” says what?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

And then “or have their vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the chairperson [where the Chair determines that a conflict of interest does not operate]”

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said:

Yes, sorry Chair, what you were saying, I think your point you're making is that you didn't want it to be seen written here as declare conflict of interest and then the Chair determining that the person could still vote, so I think you what you wanted...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Based on what the Honourable FS explained, I can come and declare what I consider to be a conflict of interest; however, when it is judged in procurement circles, this would not be a conflict of interest, so you will put not just that, but where the Chair determines that a conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances.

The Honourable Minister of MEHSS said:

Don't you just need one line then?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Just saying, without the approval of the chairperson, you can't vote; if you do vote, your votes are going to be disregarded. You don't need two lines. You just need one clear line that says your vote is going to be disregarded if the Chairperson feels that there is a conflict of interest.

Madam Chair said:

I think there might be a legal style.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

No no. Have their vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the Chairperson. All right. All right. So this shall not happen where the Chair determined because they may have done that, but the Chair...

Madam Chair said:

What was that, Honourable Minister of Health? Honourable Buffonge, what was that?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

But it can work... oh dear. What I'm saying, as it stands here it does not smell of integrity. All right. So, what I'm saying you put that; they can continue as it says there where the Chair determines that a conflict of interest does not operate in the circumstances. So, you declare it somebody says it but the Chair determined on the evidence a conflict of interest does not operate. Where the Chair determined that a conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances, because this is after everything.

The Honourable Premier said:

Stop. Read what you want us to put rather than... yes but you continue to explain.

Madam Chair said:

Just read...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

“Where the Chair determines that a conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances”, because this is after everything...

Madam Chair said:

No explaining.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Okay, that's it, that's it, that's it. “In the circumstances”.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

I just want you to kind of read on from starting at to just to read out what you're trying to, what a full sentence or what you want the provision to look like because I'm getting confused as to where you want to insert where you want to start with the proposal. So, read out the en-

tire the replacement to two actually, so I can understand what is being...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

I'm just reading the section, "A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee or Evaluation Panel shall not without the approval the chairperson vote on a matter in which he declares a conflict of interest or have their vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the chairperson [where the Chair determined that a conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances]".

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Just a point of clarity for me, what's considered a conflict of interest legally? And the reason I'm asking that is because I think the reason why we're having a problem here is, for me, if I don't have any vested interest directly, then I don't think it's a conflict. So, I'll use an example and Honourable I hope you don't mind if I use you and myself as an example. Let's say MS Osborne for instance was tendering for a supply vote, we have the same last name, they're my family members, but I'm not a director of the company nor have I ever had any involvement in the company. Honourable Romeo would say that he's not a director of Romeo's Hardware either...

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, I'll give you just a simple example. I am a director in a company, I am a part of the Procurement Board for example, and I am voting on a tender before the board including one that comes from the company that I am say a director of shareholder. So clear conflict of interest.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

No, so sorry Chair. So, in your case, for me, for the just because of transparency. I would declare listen, this person is my cousin, but I have no shares, I do not operate in the company and that is where section B now would come in where the Chair on hearing that because you've declared a conflict of interest because is a family member but because of the circumstances, the Chair may determine that a conflict

of interest does not operate in these circumstances. Did I have that right Honourable Deputy Premier?

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

But so, you for the avoidance of doubt you declare it and it is based on what we're doing here is the Chair to determine whether based on your explanation if a conflict of interest operates in these circumstances. So, for me, for such situation like that once you're a family member and because of the context of Montserrat and perception is key you declare it because there's other members of the board who are saying why is Kenya Lee not saying that John Osborne or Mrs. Honourable Mulcare are family or family friends because we know so there is the perception. So, you declare it and a Chair will make the determination after you give the explanation. I have no financial interest in this organization and it's up for it up to the Chair to make a determination. I think that's what this section is expected to, to, to... yeah.

The Honourable Premier said:

Not wishing to be devil's advocate suppose now suppose Don and myself in the same choir.

Madam Chair said:

We know you will be singing gospels so there would be no problem.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

There's realistic and then there's ridiculous.

Madam Chair said:

I'm sorry. Let us go on please. Let us go on.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

No, I'm just saying in the context of conflict of interest it should be that is why you have experts on these panels. It should be up to you who are versed in procurement and when you put these persons on these panels they should have some level of expertise in procurement to know what should be declared as a potential conflict or interest or otherwise.

The Honourable Premier said:

I hope you were not taking the one with me and Don in the choir. Because I can't sing.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Sorry, that's not where I was going, but I'm just saying there are levels to conflict of interest and what you should as an expert on a panel have to be seen to declare.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Deputy Premier, I hope you are now...

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Yes, I just want clarity; it may be in the section, and I've missed it. We're going to 39 (3) now.

Madam Chair said:

No, let us finish...

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Sorry, the addition to (b), I don't think that addition should be inserted there. It talks about where the Chairperson determines that the conflict did not operate in the circumstances. I don't see the need for that. As a provision, it's fine. So, there is going to be a member who is going to be hearing or determining a matter, the member declares a conflict of interest, but he doesn't have the approval of the Chairperson, so he cannot vote. Now, if he is going to vote and the Chairperson is going to give approval, it means that this is a process that the Chairperson is going to undertake before he gets to the voting stage. So, I don't see

the fertility of adding “where the Chairperson determines that a conflict of interest did not operate in those circumstances.” To me, it's a given that the Chairperson before saying yes, although you've said you have a conflict of interest you are going to... although you've said you have a conflict of interest, I'm going to give it some thought, I'm going to determine the extent to which this conflict of interest is going to affect your decision or factor in and I'm going to say yes or no you as a member of the board can proceed to vote or not but the addition where the chairperson determines, I'm not clear what it does except introduce a level of, to me, it's a slightly confusing.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

I need some clarification. If a member declares a conflict of interest, wouldn't the officer, FS or who is to decide on whether that person can continue, wouldn't that decision have been made before the person continues to sit on the panel, because to me, if you declare a conflict of interest, you should not continue to sit in that room. The individual should have been removed from that room. That's what I'm trying to clarify.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

I think that's what the AG is saying.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Okay, okay. Yeah, right, so depending on... If the level is so high that the person can't continue, it means the person would have been asked to leave that room. Right, so be... Okay, okay, but if the person... Okay, okay, got it.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Just to give a brief example, say for example, I am a member of the board and I say, oh, well, you know, my brother or my cousin, let's say my cousin, is bidding on something, tendered for something and, you know, I said that to the FS, I am convinced that, you know, there's

a conflict of interest. The FS is going to conduct his weighing exercise, ask relevant questions, seek relevant information to determine whether a cousin is far enough removed so that whatever decision I am going to, whatever decision the board is going to make, it's not going to... my relationship with my cousin, I'm not going to... he's convinced that that relationship is not going to influence my decision, if you understand. So, factors such as how close you are, the relationship with the person who is bidding, one of the tenderers, he's convinced that I am professional, so I'm going to say, okay, even though my cousin has submitted a tender, there are other better evaluated tenders and I have the level of integrity that will guide me towards choosing another tender. So, I can't detail all of the factors that are going to be considered in a given case, but the expectation is that the Chairperson, I keep saying the FS, sorry, the Deputy Chairperson is going to be able to do that assessment and arrive at a determination.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Minister of BUILTE had her mic on.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, 'A', may support that argument without the approval of the Chairperson, but it comes down to saying, "have their vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the Chairperson". We need to know that, put it clear, for those of us who are reading, "where the Chair determined that the conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances" to say, have the vote disregarded if they vote without the approval of the Chairperson and we left it there. No. It's, for example, somebody when I was in court, and I'm going to give a real life. I was in court and I thought like, like, like the Honourable Attorney General, I could sit on anybody's case, right. My cousin came into court and I heard the case, but I decided, let me go and read up what the judicial rules are. It says, no. You have to recuse yourself, but I thought I was Miss Wonderful and Righteous, could deal with anybody, alright. And then a conflict of interest would have arisen. Had that matter gone to the court, the court would have ruled that I should have recused myself. So in the circumstances where you went and you did something without recognizing, I need it to be laid out that a determination is then made by the Chair that this conflict of interest did not operate in the circumstances and, of course,

that would be delineated in the minutes, so if we have an inquiry or anything, you can see that the Chair has outlined the reasons why he or she determined that a conflict of interest did not operate in those circumstances. So, when it comes to 'B', you need that clarity. In 'A', yes, the Chair would have determined that the conflict of interest did not, but not for 'B'. It does not suggest that on the face of the current drafting.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Chair, I have a suggestion for the matter. My suggestion is that we should just coin it in the fact that we should say "A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee or Evaluation Panel shall", and I'm going to put the onus here, on the person who is declaring the interest by saying "recuse him or herself from voting where it has been declared that there is a material conflict of interest".

The Financial Secretary said:

The Chairperson. Okay. Just to clarity...

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

On these panels, will be honest and upstanding citizens have declared the interest. So, let's just switch it to put the onus on that person to declare that interest.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

And suppose they're not. Then you've corrupted the procurement process.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Yeah, but it doesn't matter really because they would still have to declare it to you in the first place.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

True.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

According to this, it would still have to be declared in the first place for you to be able to even have...

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Yeah, but then sometimes you're aware of... as a Chair, you're aware that there's a conflict of interest. But if you term it like that, then the Chair doesn't have the power to call out that there's a conflict of interest. You'll have to trust that the person...

Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

Again, Madam Speaker. Chair again, we're here for the longest while. Is it that we need to remove the 'B' section? Because I don't see how you can vote if the Chair already determined that...

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

The 'B' is saying that...

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge, said:

You cannot vote without the Chair's permission.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

The 'B' is enforcing the chair's power to...

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

So, what are we fixing?

Madam Chair said:

Allow the FS to explain, please, so I can understand.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

I understand the section. The Honourable Deputy Premier says it's not clear if someone is just picking this up. The AG, Honourable AG

would have indicated that the addition that the Honourable Deputy Premier wants to add may create some confusion. The Honourable Mrs. Mulcare would have indicated that the provision that is there right now is fine. So, I really don't... So, it's up to the House now to determine if the provision is fine as is or do we have to add the provisions outlined by the Deputy Premier.

Madam Chair said:

Honourable Buffonge, you want to say something because your mic is on?

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Madam Chair, let me just fix my statement because I think we shouldn't even get to the point of voting. So, I'll just fix my statement to say that the person should "recuse themselves when they have declared a material interest or it has been determined by the Chair that there is a material conflict of interest". That would just be simpler because we shouldn't get to the point of voting at any point.

Madam Chair said:

So, you're saying to change 'B' to that?

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

No, no, no. So, you're taking out 'A' and 'B' altogether and you're saying "A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee or Evaluation Panel shall [recuse him or herself where the person has declared a material interest or the Chairperson has identified a material conflict of interest]".

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Sorry, has declared a conflict of interest because you're...

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Sorry, "declared a conflict of interest or the chairperson has identified"... Pardon? No, what I'm saying is the member itself should be able to declare a conflict of interest. So, where the member has de-

clared a material conflict of interest or the Chairperson himself has identified a material conflict of interest the person will recuse themselves. No, no, no, no. I said a material conflict of interest. Okay, all right, no problem.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so Members, are we happy with that, to make that change? Why?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Attorney General is saying now, based on that, there are no levels of conflict of interest anymore. Sorry, let the AG speak for herself.

The Honourable Crenston Buffonge said:

So, what are we trying to fix for the fifth time?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Sorry. Right, so that's what is there except you're proposing a more concise version but the Honourable Minister is suggesting a different approach where that person just cannot vote.

Madam Chair said:

Well, I think she agreed with what was proposed.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, are we going with what the Honourable Minister has said or?

Madam Chair said:

So, let us vote on that. Let us vote on that. Could you read out what you have? Are we ready with the draft? Honourable Lewis, let's deal with the matter in front of us.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, Madam Chair, so considering what the Honourable Minister indicated, as I was explaining to him, because it creates responsibilities on two persons, I broke it down into two sections, so one of them would be, subsections rather, one of them would be the member recusing himself and the other one would be a duty imposed on the Chairperson to restrict. So, the first one, which is now 'two', "A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee, or Evaluation Panel, shall [recuse himself from voting on a matter in respect of which he declares a conflict of interest]". Is that one clear? Okay, so what 'three' will now be, "The Chairperson shall restrict a member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Procurement Committee, or Evaluation Panel from voting on a matter in respect of which the Chairperson determines a conflict of interest arises in respect of the member". My apologies. So that will remove 'two', insert a 'two' and 'three', and what is now 'three' becomes 'four'.

Madam Chair said:

Okay. So, are we happy with that amendment?

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Okay, so we will move forward with that amendment. Any other? Is the mic on? Yes, it becomes four. Okay.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

"Who is a public officer and who contravenes this section is subject to disciplinary proceedings under the public service law". Now, what happens to someone, and I go back to the Public Procurement Board, I think is where, if they're not a public officer, I may have missed it. I acknowledge that because, you know, it's reading quickly and so on. How do we deal with them? Do we, what do we do? Suspend, remove? Would they fall under that? Because there's provision for public servant, but members of the Board, especially the Public Procurement Board, may not be a public servant or public officer. What is the disciplinary measure for that person? I don't know if I missed it or we're going to put it in the rules.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Right, so I think you're essentially asking if there is provision made to remove, because realistically that's what you're ultimately going to end up doing, removing a member who breaches that provision. So, because it was initially structured in a way that it wasn't for somebody like that. It doesn't have a penalty for somebody like that. It was just a situation where you're going to disregard their vote, treat their vote as a non-issue. So, you're asking for, because realistically what you can do is remove them from the board, panel, etc. That was not, doesn't seem as if it was contemplated that you remove them. Rather you just disregard their vote if they don't get the, if they do have a conflict of interest and they don't get the approval of the chairperson. Now, sorry.

The Honourable Premier said:

No, I think what is happening here is there's provision to sanction the public officer, but there's no provision for the private sector individual.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, what you're asking for is essentially removal of that person from, if they decide to proceed, rather bearing in mind the amendment, if they choose not to recuse themselves. Am I correct? You're asking for removal of that person.

The Honourable Premier said:

No, it's, sorry. "A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental," etc., "who is a public officer and who contravenes this section is subject to disciplinary proceedings under the public service law". So, the question is, if Don was, sorry, yeah, if Don was on it as a private sector person, how do you treat with him in like manner as you would treat with a public officer?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Well, as it is, there, from what I'm seeing, there is, obviously, you cannot institute disciplinary proceedings against a private individual, a non-public officer, because it would be to what end?

The Honourable Premier said:

You can terminate them.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Right. That's what I'm saying. Apart from terminating their membership on the board. Now, is that something that you want to do? Is that something you want to provide for?

The Honourable Premier said:

If you're providing for a public officer to be punished or sanctioned, why is it that the private sector person is not equally sanctioned?

Madam Chair said:

Minister of Agriculture, you wanted to say something?

The Honourable Premier said:

No, no, no, we're waiting for the officials to pay attention.

Madam Chair said:

Oh, I'm sorry.

The Honourable Premier said:

Do we understand? You can sanction the public officer, but there's no provision to sanction a private sector person.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, you want to provide such?

The Honourable Premier said:

Provide for sanctions for all persons on the board, whether public or private.

The Honourable Minister of MALHEYAS said:

Sorry. Let me just make a suggestion. Can we just make it general by just saying “A member of the Public Procurement Board, Departmental Tender Committee or Evaluation Panel [who contravenes this section is subject to disciplinary proceedings]”. So that covers everybody.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

You can't discipline a private individual. It's a pointless action.

The Honourable Minister of MAHLEYAS said:

No, but a disciplinary action could be removing them from one of the boards.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Let me rephrase. The only thing you can really do is remove them.

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Let's just make it clear.

The Honourable Premier said:

The clarity here is that a member of the private sector on the Public Procurement Board who is not covered under the public service regulations could be sanctioned by removal, suspension, or what have you. So that only requires one additional...

Madam Chair said:

Suspension or removal by whom?

The Honourable Premier said:

It has to be the Chair.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay, so an additional section.

Madam Chair said:

So, are we agreed on how we move forward?

The Honourable Financial Secretary said:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Do we have the wording for that? We're waiting for the... I'm waiting on the AG to hear for the draft. Honourable AG, are you ready for us?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, Madam Chair. The new sub clause which will be 'five'. "The Chairperson may suspend or terminate the appointment of a member of the Public Procurement Board or an Evaluation Panel who is not a public officer and who contravenes the section". And of course, I left out the reference to the departmental tenders committee because that is comprised of public officers.

Madam Chair said:

So, could you re-read that, please, sorry.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Sorry, the FS. Sorry, the FS. Yeah, the FS is acting on the advice of the Chair. Madam Chair, just a slight adjustment. Let me re-read it.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, fix it and then.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, because the FS appoints well... Sorry, just one second. Crave your indulgence, please, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Let's hold on, please. Honourable AG, are you ready for us? Yes, Honourable AG?

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, Madam Chair. So, the insertion of subclause 5 will read as follows. "The Financial Secretary may suspend or terminate a member of the Public Procurement Board or an Evaluation Panel who is not a public officer and who contravenes this section in the same manner in which the member was appointed". So, essentially, because the Public Procurement Board is appointed in a particular way, the members of that board is appointed in a particular way and the Evaluation Panel, those members are appointed in a different way, then we have to be clear that the removal is going to be in accordance with that appointment, because the general rule is the person who appoints removes. Sorry, sorry, let me rephrase that. So, I should have mentioned that it's only going to apply to the (PPB) Public Procurement Board, because the Evaluation Panel is not actually appointed by the FS. So, "the FS may suspend or terminate the appointment of a member of the PPP, Public Procurement Board, who is not a public officer, who contravenes this section in the manner in which the member was appointed". Now, in relation to the Public Procurement Board, because that Evaluation Panel is appointed by either the Public Procurement Board or the Departmental Procurement Committee, then that board is going to, the panel, rather, is going to be removed in a similar manner. So, I'm going to insert that as a separate sub-clause.

Madam Chair said:

Which I hope you'll read for us.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

I will. I will. Okay. So, "A member of an Evaluation Panel who is not a public officer and who contravenes this section may be suspended or terminated by the Public Procurement Board or Departmental Procurement Committee". My apologies. Let me restart that. "The Public Procurement Board or a Departmental Procurement Committee may suspend or terminate the appointment of a member of an evaluation panel who is not a public officer and who contravenes this section in

the manner in which the member was appointed”. Yeah, that's it. Shall I repeat it?

Madam Chair said:

It seems as if we don't have enough people to vote. Okay. So, we wait until they come back? Officer, could you just please... So, when you're ready, Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Okay. So, to repeat subclause 5, the new subclause 5 is going to be inserted. I'm sorry, 39, clause 39. So, subclause 5. Remember, we inserted, yeah, 39. Remember, we inserted...

Madam Chair said:

There was a renumbering.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

So, what is number '3' is now number '4'. So, subclause 5, the “Financial Secretary may suspend or terminate the appointment of a member of the Public Procurement Board who is not a public officer and who contravenes this section”. Okay. Next one. '6'. “The Public Procurement Board or the Departmental Procurement Committee”, as the case may be, because both of them, it depends on the situation, but anyway, “the Public Procurement Board or the Departmental Procurement Committee, as the case may be, may suspend or terminate the appointment of a member of the Evaluation Panel who is not a public officer and who contravenes this section.” That's it. Okay.

Madam Chair said:

So, okay. So, finish.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Sorry, no, I was just explaining that it's currently called the Departmental Tenders Committee, but under this Bill, they're moving to Departmental Procurement Committee.

Madam Chair said:

Okay. Okay. So, Members, we've heard the amendments, and are we in favour? So, I think we'll move forward with that.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair, during our discussions on how to address this, we realized that there is, and my apologies for taking us back, but I realized that there was just a minor issue in clause 7, subclause 7 (2) (b). So, it provides for a person nominated by the Attorney General, and we wanted it to be clear that although the AG is going to be nominated, the process of appointment is going to be by the FS, because from experience, we've encountered issues where there's a lack of clarity as to who is going to undertake that task, whereas the subsequent provisions make it clear that the FS is going to be the one appointing the other three persons. So, in that – I'll just read it. I'll just read it for you. (b), “a person nominated by the Attorney General with at least five years' experience in law [and appointed by the FS].” My apologies, “the Financial Secretary”.

Madam Chair said:

Okay. So, members, are we happy with that adjustment? The clause having been accepted already? Okay. So, the question then is that Clauses 30 to 40 should stand as part of the Bill. As amended. Thank you. Should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 30 to 40 now stand as part of the Bill.

The Clerk said:

Clauses 41 to 47.

Madam Chair said:

The question is that Clauses 40...

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Madam Chair.

Madam Chair said:

Yes, Honourable AG.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Clause 42, subsection 2, where it continues on page 40, the last line of subclause 2, you'll note that the first bracket before 44, we're deleting that, and the last bracket at the end of the sentence, we're deleting that as well. So, you're looking at the 44 (4), after the word "section", take out the bracket. On page 40. Yeah. So, where it says section 44 (4), after the word "section", delete that first bracket, and then at the end of the sentence, delete the last bracket.

Madam Chair said:

So, delete the outer two brackets.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

Yes, basically. Yeah. Thank you.

Madam Chair said:

So, then, the question is that clauses 41 to 47, with the amendment, should form part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

Clauses 41 to 47, as amended, now stand as part of the Bill.

The Clerk said:

Enacting Clause and Long Title.

Madam Chair said:

The question is that the Enacting Clause and Long Title should stand as part of the Bill.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Chair said:

The Enacting Clause and Long Title now stand as part of the Bill. The Assembly will now resume its sitting.

THE ASSEMBLY RESUMED AT 6.55 P.M. FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

Madam Speaker said:

Recognise the Honourable Premier.

Third Reading – Public Procurement Bill 2025 No. 5 of 2025

The Honourable Premier said:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to report to this Honourable House that the Bill shortly entitled **Public Procurement Bill 2025, No. 5 of 2025**, has passed through the committee stage with very robust discussions and amendments. And I commend the Bill as revised with the amendments to this Honourable House for a third reading. And while I'm at it, I wish to thank all Members of the House for the robustness of the discussion within committee.

Madam Speaker said:

Do we have a seconder? Recognise the Honourable Minister of BUILTE.

The Honourable Minister of BUILTE said:

Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Madam Speaker said:

It has been moved and seconded that the Bill, shortly entitled Public Procurement Bill 2025, as amended, should be read a third time and passed.

The question was put and carried

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill, as amended, will now be read a third time.

The Clerk said:

Public Procurement Bill, No. 5 of 2025.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill, Public Procurement Bill 2025, has been read a third time and is accordingly passed. Recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

The Honourable Attorney General (Ag) said:

I crave your indulgence for a brief period. I crave your indulgence briefly, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, after consultation with members of the Opposition, in particular, and Members on this side, we are recommending that the second and third reading of the Bill, Police Amendment Bill 2025, be withdrawn and will be resubmitted to the House for first reading in the new session. There are substantial works which they have indicated that they would need, and we would not be in a position to conclude it today. So, I am therefore recommending that we take it off, and I think Honourable Mulcare wish to second that motion.

Madam Speaker said:

I recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to second that motion.

Madam Speaker said:

It has been moved and seconded that the Bill, shortly entitled Police Amendment Bill 2025, be withdrawn.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

The Bill has been accordingly withdrawn.

10. OTHER BUSINESS.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker said:

Do we have someone moving the adjournment, or are we going to stay here? Excuse me? It's up to you. The opportunity is given to you. Adjournment was announced. Is somebody going to move the adjournment?

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I move an adjournment of this Honourable House sine die.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker. Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

Yes, Honourable.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Madam Speaker, this morning you offered the opportunity to rebut what was done, and I think I have a responsibility to say something.

Madam Speaker said:

I offered the opportunity, and it is up to the Members to accept, but nobody said anything, so we have to proceed with it. So, are you now going to make your statement?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I think usually it comes after the call for an adjournment. Yes, I'm willing.

Madam Speaker said:

Okay, but you were also designated a time of 10 minutes. Each Member was given 10 minutes, so you may proceed. Recognise the Honourable Romeo. I recognise the Honourable Romeo.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this morning, the Honourable Premier was allowed to malign the Opposition, say some very disturbing things about the Opposition, and I'm not allowed to do as he did, and use those similar words, but what I can say is that much of what he said is not true at all. He accused us of using the Resolution, which was placed in the Honourable House the other day, which I raised, a Resolution to increase, let me put it, let me make sure I say it correctly. It's a Resolution calling on the government and all relevant departments, without imposing any obligation whatsoever on them, without the approval of the Cabinet under section 70 of the Montserrat Constitution, Order 2010, to discuss an urgent adjustment to support for the vulnerable pensioners, public servants, and other working poor in the public and private sector. He made accusations that we were playing politics and that we were misleading the public by going on the radio, a whole host of things. I requested the opportunity to rebut, and thankfully, Madam Speaker, you finally agreed. I don't think I'm going to be able to address it in 10 minutes, so I will use another fo-

rum to do just what was done while I was overseas listening, but I owe it to the public to tell them at least that my job was done by raising the Resolution, by making an increase in income for the working poor, public servants, and even people in the private sector, to make it a priority. That's my job. So, whatever they may like to say, it is now a priority, and it is going to be addressed. However, Madam Speaker, without doing what the Honourable Premier did, because I'm still interested in us having a "one-Montserrat", my rebuttal is going to emphasize the fact that if the Honourable Premier knows the rules, he knows it better than most in this House, and he's taken advantage of the ignorance of many in this House that he was doing something very inappropriate.

Erskine May, which is the authoritative guide on parliamentary procedure in the United Kingdom, and Montserrat, the House of Commons and our Assembly, they are the authorities with regard to rules, and they have strict rules about making accusations against Members of the House, as was the case this morning. Here's a summary of what they say. Members must not make personal accusations, imputations or improper motives, or impute improper motives, or use offensive or insulting language about the Members of the House. The rule exists to maintain order and mutual respect in parliamentary debate. Madam Speaker, we are committed to the "one-Montserrat" talk. And that is why my tone, even now, will be to suggest that from here on, I expect the Honourable Premier to try and at least maintain mutual respect by the words he uses. And in that vein, Madam Speaker, at least we can have a civilized discussion. Madam Speaker, Erskine May goes on to suggest that if you're preparing a speech or drafting remarks, it's important to avoid direct accusations or language that could be interpreted as imputing another Member's honour or integrity, unless you intend to do a motion. So, if you intend to attack somebody's honour, you need to do a motion where the person is able to rebut what is said. Madam Speaker, I also want to say that the Speaker's role, the Speaker of the House, will typically intervene if a Member makes an accusation or uses unparliamentary language. The offending remark may be required to be withdrawn, and the Member may be disciplined if they persist. So, the apology he gave is one thing, but if you keep persisting in this way, he needs to be disciplined, or whoever needs to be disciplined. Madam Speaker, I want to emphasise as well that if anybody were to go back and listen to the Resolution, I was very careful not to

blame the government for the situation we're in. I was very careful not to respond to even the negative things the Honourable Premier said when I came back and rebutted. I tried to stay in a frame of mind that would encourage us to have some unity on the matter. And I want to make this very plain. Had we ever united, as suggested by the Resolution, as an Assembly, and whenever the results from the research that is being done, when those results or evidence come back, if we were to ever unite and make a case to the British Government, I promise the people of Montserrat that it will be the best case, best opportunity for significant change for the people of Montserrat.

Because what we may end up having is that the government goes, negotiates, comes back with something, it may be reasonable, but it could have been far better. And in putting that Resolution forward, it was giving us an opportunity to demonstrate our willingness to work together as a team. So, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to say any more than that. I am going to use the opportunity to go on the radio and speak more specifically to some of the false accusations and statements made. Because people out there are confused. Confused. They want to hear us sound as if we're working together. And as much as I regret what happened this morning, please, and the last thing I want to tell you, I didn't debate this afternoon for that reason. I have evidence here that I wanted to share with the House about poor procurement procedures that led to serious problems for Montserrat in the past. And I knew if I were to raise them this afternoon, there'd be a lot of confusion. What happened this morning would be nothing compared to me exposing the truth about the fact that you may pass rules in this House, but if you don't obey them, and it's possible not to obey them, it's useless. Rules that govern this House need to be respected.

We make mistakes; correct us. Rules that govern procurement, I am going to get my chance to speak to the people of Montserrat and let them know that the accusations that have been made against me are unfounded and that the people continue to be misled by a voice that I'm going to hold back. Because I gave the information. A certain tenure that led to the loss of life of the people of Montserrat. Loss of life on Montserrat. Misleading the public, not providing proper information, has led to loss of life. And I didn't call any names, and I'm going to end.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order.

Madam Speaker said:

What's your Point of Order, please?

The Honourable Premier said:

I was not in government when persons lost their lives in Montserrat.

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

I didn't call any names, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

I was coming to that.

The Honourable Premier said:

Me no me call you name either.

Madam Speaker said:

I was coming to that. People are taking offence to statements that have been made without their names actually being called. However, however, let us refrain from casting accusations at each other and move on. Are you done?

The Honourable Donaldson Romeo said:

And Madam Speaker, anything I say in this House, I'll provide evidence to back it. And I end right there.

Madam Speaker said:

Thank you. Do we have a seconder for the adjournment, please? I recognise the Honourable Mulcare.

The Honourable Nyota Mulcare said:

Madam Speaker, thank you. I rise to second that motion, the adjournment. Thank you.

The Honourable Premier said:

Madam Speaker, I think I have a right to respond to the statement made by Honourable Romeo.

Madam Speaker said:

Briefly?

The Honourable Premier said:

And if you will permit me, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker said:

You wouldn't get more than the time he has gotten, though.

The Honourable Premier said:

No, no, I don't need more time than that. If one were to go back on Facebook.

Madam Speaker said:

No...

The Honourable Premier said:

No. The point I'm making, he's saying that they did not, and I impugned certain things. And I'm saying I will provide the evidence as provided on Facebook. And I stand by the statements which I made on the basis on what was on social media. I was copied in on those. So, I'm not withdrawing those statements. Those statements are facts.

Madam Speaker said:

Let us move on with the adjournment. Now, it has been moved and seconded that this Honourable House should stand adjourned sine die.

The question was put and carried.

Madam Speaker said:

This Honourable House now stands adjourned sine die.

Assembly adjourned at approximately 7:10 PM

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Dated this ____11th ____ day of _____November_____ 2025

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly



MONTERRAT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

AMENDED ORDER OF THE DAY

Meeting No. 9 of the 18th Parliament
Monday 28th July, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room, Cultural Centre, Little Bay

1. PRAYERS

2. OATHS

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes No. 5 of the 18th Parliament, dated Thursday, 10th April 2025.

4. PAPERS TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE

(a) Financial Secretary

- i. Monserrat Arts Council Financial Statements for the year ended December 31st, 2017.
- ii. Basic Needs Trust Fund Accounts for the Financial Period Ended April 2020 – March 2021.
- iii. Montserrat Social Security Fund – Financial Statements for the Year Ended March 31st, 2022.

S R & O No. 17 of 2025 Income and Corporation Tax (Robert Bourdages) (Exemption) Order;

S R & O No. 18 of 2025 Income and Corporation Tax (Employees of Stantec Consulting International Ltd.) (Exemption) Order;

S R & O No. 19 of 2025	Income and Corporation Tax (Franco Gerosa) (Exemption) Order;
S R & O No. 20 of 2025	Customs Duties and Consumption Tax (Delta Petroleum Ltd.) (Exemption) Order;
S R & O No. 21 of 2025	Customs Duties (Gregory Jean-Baptiste) (Exemption) Order;
S R & O No. 22 of 2025	Customs Duties (Peter Ryan and Lucy Ryan) (Exemption) Order;
S R & O No. 23 of 2025	Customs Duties (Vernon Farrell) (Exemption) Order;
S R & O No. 24 of 2025	Income and Corporation Tax (Glenville Daley) (Exemption) Order;

(b) Attorney General

5. MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

6. GOVERNMENT NOTICES

7. UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

8. QUESTIONS

9. MOTIONS

(1) The Premier and Minister of Finance and Economic Management to move:

The First, Second, and Third Reading of the Bill:

- (i) Supplementary Appropriation (2025) Bill, 2025

The Second and Third Reading of the Bill:

- (ii) Public Procurement Bill 2025

(2) The Attorney General to move:

The Second and Third Reading of the Bill:

(i) Police (Amendment) Bill 2025

10. OTHER BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT

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