
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2015.

PRESENT

The full list of Members present is to be inserted from the Votes and Proceedings. Members identified from the record of this Sitting:

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, Q.C. (Speaker)

Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON (Deputy Speaker)

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C. (Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)

Hon. R. L. SEALY (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER (Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Mr. J. D. PAUL (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE (Minister of Health) (Leader of the House)

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE (Minister of Environment and Drainage)

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, Q.C. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Prayers were read.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members. This House is now in session. Members, I have with me the minutes of our meetings held on the 20th and 27th October respectively - minutes for Tuesday, October 20, 2015 and Tuesday, October 27, 2015.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that those minutes be taken as read.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

PAPERS

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay the following: the Sugar Industry Workers Provident Fund Order 2015; the Occupational Benefits Amendment Regulations 2015; the Agreement for the Policy Based Loan and Technical Cooperation Grant between the Government of Barbados and the Latin American Development Bank (CAF); and the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited Annual Report 2014.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay the audited financial statements and annual reports on the activities of the Board of Management of the Lodge School for the periods 2008 to 2009, 2009 to 2010, 2010 to 2011, 2011 to 2012 and 2012 to 2013.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's sitting.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. CLERK: Government Business is the order of the day. Order Number 18, Sir - in the name of the Honourable Minister of the Environment and Drainage, to move the second reading of the National Conservation Commission Validation of Fees Bill, 2015.

ORDER NO. 18 – NATIONAL CONSERVATION COMMISSION VALIDATION OF FEES BILL, 2015

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister. Thank you very much.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker. In moving the second reading of this validation order, I should like to take the opportunity to talk a little bit about the National Conservation Commission and how the government has sought to reshape its mandate and to expand its services to reflect more on what the country's sustainable development direction is and how the National Conservation Commission must play a role in helping us to achieve our mandate to become the greenest economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. I have had the honour as Minister of Environment to work with the Commission over the last few years, and I am pleased to announce that there has been a steady rebranding of the institution to reflect more on where we are going than on where we came from.

The Parks and Beaches Commission was established by act in 1970 and it was the foundation for the establishment of its successor, the National Conservation Commission, which was established by act of Parliament in 1982 at Cap. 393. Now, both acts provided the framework for issues related to terrestrial and marine environment, together with the provision of services to be offered to the public. And these services, Mr. Speaker, sir, would include safety and security of beaches and parks, the provision of washroom facilities, the provision for the charging of services rendered by the Commission. And in recent times, the Commission has attracted a number of private sector contracts where it provides landscaping services to these particular entities.

The National Conservation Commission, Mr. Speaker, sir, has made a tremendous contribution to the social, environmental and economic development of the country. And through its legislation, it has also contributed to the governance standards of our nation. So that in seeking to present this validation order to this Honourable House, the regulations governing the National Conservation Commission's Act - the National Conservation Commission Fees Regulations 1983 - makes provisions for the charging of fees for services provided

and the schedule listed King George V Memorial Park, Hastings Rocks and Farley Hill, where the following fees were car park fees and rental of area or of space.

The above fees were reviewed in 1990, Mr. Speaker, at which time Cabinet approved a 50 per cent increase with the inclusion of fees for beach vendors' licences and entrance fees for Harrison's Cave, which at the time fell under the governance of the National Conservation Commission. And we understand that there were fees which were assigned and collected, and there must be the accompanying regulations which makes the process legitimate. And where this is not the case, then a validation order must be undertaken and thus we have the validation of those fees that did not fall under the 1990 regulations.

In reviewing the National Conservation Commission Fees Regulations 1993 and its operation where fees are charged, it has been recognised that the fees were charged and collected without the legal authority, thus making it necessary for the following to be validated: Farley Hill - commercial events and non-profit use; the Esplanade at Bay Street; Fix Village, Speightstown and Independence Square - vendors' licences and lifeguard training. So that the presentation of this validation order is really about cleaning up the situation that existed since 1993, ensuring that the current increase in collection of fees is done in the correct governance context and ensuring that the legal authority for the collection of these fees is clearly established.

So that this discussion in this House today creates the parliamentary space for us to broadly address issues related to the development, the continued development of the Commission. The Commission is a very important institution in the context of government activities. And as I said before, the Commission offers a specific menu of services, services that are designed to enhance both the terrestrial and marine environments of our country. We have seen the Commission move from a shovel and hoe, rake and scrape institution to one that is now offering science-based services in addition to those maintenance and management services of open spaces across the island.

The Commission, of course, has the remit for managing 50 parks or open spaces around the island, and I was reliably informed by management there that it costs the Commission between \$45 000 and \$50 000 to create a park in the country. I know that there are several communities, including communities in my constituency, that have been calling for the creation of additional open spaces that are organised and managed to provide the kind of recreational activities for residents in the communities. And I wish to reiterate the point that it is really costing the Commission a minimum of \$45 000 to put these fixtures in place.

In recent years we have had the benefit of private sector institutions like the Children's Trust that have donated equipment to outfit parks around the island. And we are indebted to them for their generosity in helping us to build out this element of our built environment. But we have to continue, Mr. Speaker, sir, to drive the programme that will allow us to place these facilities around the island in urban and rural communities where we can at least guarantee those communities that there is a common area where they can gather, they can socialise, they can recreate, and they can do the things that would be important to growing communities.

We know that there is a requirement in the town planning rules where, if developments are occurring in any space of our society, that there is a requirement to have at least identified an open area where it can be considered a common space for those community dwellers to be able to have a place they call their own. Now, I know that there are - and I must say at this juncture - that there are some developers who leave the worst piece of their land as a community recreation space and they do not go back to prepare that space for the community. As a matter of fact, I am sure every member of Parliament in here can probably point to some particular piece of land in a developed area where it was left for the community - the worst piece, in the worst corner, under the worst conditions, sometimes closest to the watercourse, etc. And there is constantly a struggle between the residents of the community and the developer to come back and move rubble and to move stone and to have the place prepared for official handover to the community.

What the National Conservation Commission has done over the years is where communities have identified a need for assistance, the National Conservation Commission has sent in its equipment and staff to help prepare those areas for the communities. And in most cases, Mr. Speaker, sir, the Commission has had to maintain those spaces over the years. And I want to take this opportunity to make a special appeal to communities that have parks, that residents perhaps can become part and parcel of the maintenance of those spaces, and that once they have been prepared and retrofitted for use, that it really does not hurt if members of the community come together and work to make sure that space is well maintained.

So I want to use this opportunity to talk about fees and occupation of spaces and rental of spaces, to build a bigger message, to say that the vision of the government is to ensure that institutions like the National Conservation Commission are empowered to carry out their mandates and that their mandates must be tailored to respond to the overall mandate of the development of the nation.

We are currently in independence celebration mode, Mr. Speaker, sir, and certainly want to congratulate

Barbados for having reached 49 years of independence, a journey spawned by a vision, a vision that somehow believed that the size of this nation should not have been a determining factor in the rise of this nation. And as we march towards our 50th anniversary, it is very timely that we pause to really acknowledge the work of our forefathers - not only those of the political class, but the ordinary Barbadians who worked to plough the fields, to sow the seeds, and on whose shoulders we stood to get to where we are. And it is a testimony of the resilience of a determined people to rise to the highest heights that they could achieve.

Every morning I listen to Larry Mears' programme and of recent his callers were calling in, or have been calling in, reminiscing on the things that made our society great back then. Today they were calling in the items of the old grocery list where you would take in to the corner shop. And I was fascinated by and at times vaguely recall being a part of going to the grocer, the corner shop. And the Honourable Leader of Government Business is trying to distract me.

So this morning they talked about blue soap and snuff. They were wondering if snuff still exists and of what snuff is made. They describe it as a greenish - it is really tobacco. And they say it will make you sneeze when you inhale it. But it made you do other things too that I am sure they could not talk about on radio. Lifebuoy soap. They did not mention carbolic soap though, and I know some of you remember that. And that was used not only for bathing but also for medicinal purposes. And they did not mention Canadian Healing Oil, which was for external purposes but was also used for internal consumption. But those are the stories of our development. Those are the markings of our national DNA, of who we are.

And that is why I am taking the opportunity today to talk about an institution like the National Conservation Commission - now so called - that has also made a significant contribution to those important national markings as we look across time and as we scope our own development. This space, as I talked about, provides the opportunity for me to speak on how the National Conservation Commission has been transformed through a new vision. A vision that focuses on its role in national development. Moving from a perception of hand tools, organisation and organising to one of mechanised equipment and one that is contributing on a daily basis to the national development. They are working towards helping us create a cleaner and greener economy, society and environment.

The Commission is improving its service offerings and moving from a basic type of service provision to one that is science-based and one that is transforming in its work as it relates to the culture of the country. I am pleased to say that we are now on a trajectory to create one of the

most modern institutions of its kind in the hemisphere. And I will prove that to you as I go on in this presentation.

But the NCC is an institution that benefits from a transfer from central government, and it has over the years. But it is also an institution that generates a significant amount of revenue annually based on the fees it charges for services. And let me say that it is very flexible in terms of charging those fees because there are some institutions who are unable to pay the going rate for some of our facilities. And the Commission is very flexible in at times waiving costs or at times discounting costs in terms of the fees it charges. And I have emphasised over and over that a fee should never stand in the way of allowing a community to execute its own social plan that is designed to bring families and other communities together.

But while we say that, we also say this: that entities, private sector entities out there, should not seek to take the Commission for a ride by staging these massive events, generating significant revenue and then resisting paying the Commission its fees. And that will not be tolerated because in the act, in the very act that I referenced earlier, there is a provision that allows the Commission to bring legal action against anyone who chooses not to abide by the rubrics of the law as it relates to the governance of the Commission.

So we are making our contribution, we get an annual subvention. The revenue generated would primarily go towards the ongoing maintenance of our properties. And it would go forward in terms of expanding our services and our service offering to the public. I know that the Ministry of Finance is persistent in its advice that statutory corporations who are benefiting currently from transfers become more efficient, be more revenue generating where possible, to ensure that the burden on central government is continuously being reduced. And as Minister of two very important statutory corporations, my commitment is to ensure that these two corporations continue to work to drive down their demand on central government funds. It is critical because as we stabilise our economy, as we reorganise our sectors, it is important that all elements of government do their part in assisting in managing downwards the demands on central government's finances.

And I am pleased to say when I reveal what the NCC has been doing in terms of earning money over the years, it might surprise you, because there is a view that the NCC cannot or should not or is not able to handle all of these funds. But the NCC has made millions of dollars over the last 10 to 15 years in services and fees charged for its services and its properties.

The Commission over the last 45 years has made a significant contribution to the pillars of our development. And those pillars, of course, would be the social, the environmental, the economic and the governance. Further,

the existing legislation of the Commission also provides an important nexus that connects the Commission's work to the national development effort. And it provides a menu of activities and services that contribute to the pursuit of the green economy.

Now we talk, and have been talking a lot about the green economy. A significant part of the green economy is Barbados' ability to continue to build out a greener environment, one that guarantees a healthier society. And we have made the link between health and environment, we have made the link between manufacturing and environment, we have made the link between transportation and environment, we have made the link between tourism and environment. And at this time in our country's development, the environment sits as almost a hub that pulls the activities of the various sectors around some standards, some basic standards of environmental governance. And these four pillars form the basis of the framework of the government's national sustainable

development policy. I travel the region and indeed many parts of the world, and I see green spaces. I go to Guyana, for example, and Guyana has vast amounts of green spaces and wetlands. They have a botanical garden which we are working to develop at Waterford. But there's a freshness about being in a country where you are surrounded by, can I say a canopy of greenery? Would that be connoisseur? A canopy of greenery? I would advise the Clerk of Parliament to ensure that I'm given credit for that phrase. I often get credit for words that can't be found in the dictionary. So I don't think there should be a problem in asking for that courtesy. But there's something wonderful. And you know that nowadays in Barbados, every place somebody sees a tree growing up, they call it bush and they want it cut down, they want it removed. And we have to start doing, and I'm encouraging this in the Ministry of the Environment, we have to start doing more selective removal of trees that sometimes can be considered a nuisance. But in their work, they provide an important part of the fight against greenhouse gases and the emissions and impact of greenhouse gases.

And the National Conservation Commission does a tremendous job in helping. As a matter of fact, the National Conservation Commission has been on a 20 000 tree planting programme in conjunction with private sector agencies, schools, and they have planted already over 15 000 trees around the island and they are continuing to build that footprint. So I don't want anybody to believe anymore that the NCC is just about raking in half disabled people to come into a place to loiter and that there's no body of work being done that is completely and necessarily important to the national development. And that is why my emphasis has been that we have to raise the standard of the quality of persons that we are attracting to the National Conservation Commission because their job now is to push the scientific

platform of the Commission, as they are doing with the apiary that they are developing there, as they're doing with the greenhouse activities that is happening there. They have to see their work as far more substantial to the national development than they have seen it before.

And I am pleased. And I want to compliment the management and I want to compliment the staff and the Board of Management for the work that they're doing and for the fact that they have not allowed themselves to be distracted by any public utterances, but that they have stayed focused and stayed the course in helping to build out this very important programme.

We said earlier that the NCC has as its mandate the protection and the advancement and the conservation of our terrestrial and marine resources as it relates to its act. Terrestrial. I'm sure that the honourable Attorney General will love to hear this. The terrestrial component. And I'm not talking about anything high in the air now. I'm talking about the land side. The land side of the NCC's work. Terrestrial is defined to be - has the responsibility for the parks, open spaces and so on. And the Commission has made a tremendous impact over the years through the daily maintenance of 50 parks and beaches. The Commission has moved from down baskets and hoes and cutlasses to use mechanised equipment that has improved staff productivity and has improved the aesthetic appearance of our country.

The Commission has responsibility for five major parks: Farley Hill National Park, Queen's Park, King George V Memorial Park, Forston Park, which is both terrestrial and marine, and Treehouses Park. The major open spaces maintained by the Commission include Ilaro Court, the residence of our honourable Prime Minister, Government House, the official residence of our head of state, Government Headquarters, Codrington Headquarters, Wanstead, Bath and Bathsheba. These are the major areas that the Commission is responsible for.

The Commission currently has a workforce of just over 600 people. Everybody knows that the Commission was touched by retrenchment. And I'm saying that we, as a result of refocusing the institution, we've become more nimble, we've become more efficient, and we continue to do our work. Of course, this year we had to include in our body of work trying to combat the ravages of the sargassum seaweed. And I'll get to that a little later. But I'm happy to say that the combination of Mother Nature and the Commission and a number of private sector groups, we've been able to push back the impact of the sargassum seaweed. And currently we are beginning to see positive returns as a result of that activity.

Our parks are heavily used by communities across Barbados. And sometimes it fascinates me when I drive through different areas. Huddleston's turning - there's a

little space there that was created recently, the last few years. It's not a very large space. It's right nestled between an artery road and the highway. And I'm telling you that before the NCC went to that space to get it prepared, it was an innocuous little piece of land that almost looked like a wasted area. On any given weekend, and you pass through there, you will see some level of activity not only with children, but also with adults. And that's what I'm talking about. If you go down to St. Lucy, for example, down close to the Arawak cement plant, there is an elaborate open area there retrofitted with exercise equipment, retrofitted with facilities where members of the surrounding communities enjoy. As a matter of fact, that park is of the order of some of the parks that I visited in North America in terms of its offering.

And this is what we're talking about. The Minister of Health, the Hon. Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health speaks evangelically on the importance of good health practices in this country, not only by virtue of our eating habits, but also by virtue of our recreational habits. And I am putting it to this House today that the National Conservation Commission is lending a hand in that regard. And spaces that would otherwise be empty, vacant and desolate are now being occupied - spaces prepared by the Commission for public use. And I think that they should be regarded and applauded for their contribution in this regard.

I see now there's a park up going towards the Defence Force, at Paragon. And I am telling you that every Sunday evening, and I mean every, even when the rain falls, there is a pilgrimage of persons coming from across Barbados. As a matter of fact, many of our brothers and sisters from the Indian community go there and enjoy observing the aircraft as they come and go, have their children there from time to time, their pets there - although there are regulations relative to having pets in open spaces like these. Tourists go there and occupy. And it's not a large space, but it is a space created by the National Conservation Commission and it is providing a hub. As a matter of fact, persons who would go and line up in front of the fencing of the airport going up along the Fairy Valley area - many of those persons now have left that area and gone up to the park area where they are now enjoying the scenery of the area.

And I'm saying that we are not going to stand up in here and criticise any political party for not doing. Every party has contributed to the journey. Every government has contributed to the journey. And what we are now doing with our opportunity in office is extending that journey and building it out and modernising the function of this institution. And that is what we have to continue to do. One day, some other administration will take over. When they take over, we would hope that they will continue to extend the development of these types of services. But you cannot

complain that the community is becoming an isolated environment. We cannot complain that our youngsters find themselves on blocks - although there's not everything bad with a block - and at the same time, we are not prepared to support the government's effort through the Commission, to build out spaces that are specialised spaces, spaces designed to create that kind of social interaction, that kind of - of what would then have been a village community - and bring it to these parks and put in the activities that are necessary. So the work of the Commission is vast.

We provide washrooms for our facilities. And if you go to many of our facilities now, you'll find some of the best public facilities and facilities that are retrofitted with appropriate services for the disabled. There was a time when you would have to climb up to get into one of the public facilities. All of our facilities are now being retrofitted, including the newer facilities like the facility at the east coast, the refurbished Folkestone facility. All of these areas now are retrofitted with that. They have been upgraded. They are hygienic. We know that when you are trying to maintain a service that is a public service, that the challenges of maintaining the hygiene of those areas is a big challenge. And what we've tried to do is to ensure that we have the right amount of persons to deal with the maintenance of those properties.

We said that the Commission has had to deal with the seaweed, and they have cleared over 40 000 cubic metres of seaweed around the island. They had an especially grave challenge with the north and with the east. A lot of relief has come. We pulled together agencies like the Drainage Division, MTW that came and assisted us, and the Sanitation Services Authority. And we moved loads and loads and loads of that weed off the beach. I'm pleased to say now that as you move around and look at our beaches that they are very prepared and welcoming to our tourists. The beach at Welches, for example, was hard hit by seaweed and the discolouration of the near-shore water. And passing there this morning, again, I'm amazed how beautiful and white the sand is and how clear and crystal the water is. And I thank the Commission for their efforts there in that regard.

Tourism is our business. It is the most viable sector at present in the country. And I believe that the honourable Minister of Tourism should be applauded for the work that he's been doing and building out. But you know, there are people who you can never please. I heard somebody this morning saying, oh yeah, but a lot of numbers are coming in, but I wonder if they're spending any money. Weeks before it was that nobody didn't want to come to Barbados. Barbados was the nastiest place in the world and nobody want to come here. Well, at least we are starting. People are coming to the island. And the Honourable Member for St. James North - we will try to enhance and increase the spend to make sure that it benefits the country. But we're

making strides. The point is that we are making strides and we are ensuring that the traditions of this island that made its reputation great are being maintained. We will have our challenges like any other space in the world. We will have our threats, we will have our dark moments. But at the end of the day, the government has constructed a path to ensure that we maintain those markers that made us great from the very beginning. And I am going to be insistent that institutions like the NCC continue to make its presence felt in enhancing the tourist product of the island.

In responding to the sargassum weed, we've just bought two state-of-the-art pieces of equipment that are designed to not only deal with any future influx of weed, but also can deal with any oil spills or any other types of contaminations in the ocean. They are on their way to the island and at a cost of \$615 000 we've been able to source them and they will now be part of the fixture of our efforts at the Commission to keep our waters clean. And I thank the Ministry of Finance for making the funds available and allowing us to be able to get that done.

So we look after the terrestrial space. I want to see more green spaces on the highway. And we've worked with our friends in MTW to create some islands - not out of concrete but islands out of flowers and so on. If you go from one end of Warrens to the other, from the Simpson Motors roundabout to the FirstCaribbean roundabout, you'll see there's a beautiful island there. Not of concrete, but of grass and trees and Pride of Barbados trees and so on. There's a beautiful island here in the Pine. When you're coming off the highway, going down to the MTW. And the Hon. Minister of Health, who was then Minister of Highway and Transport, would have been instrumental in getting that beautiful island placed there.

I drove from the south, from Chancery Lane all the way to the north past - is it Spring Hall? - and I was totally impressed that for the first time the shoulders of the highway are now being fully maintained. And you know, I said to myself, when Beautify Barbados was created, Beautify Barbados was created within a framework that after it was seeded, it was supposed to be handed over to the private sector. That never happened. We maintained it, we kept it. And they did very good work. We did very, very good work. But it became difficult for government to maintain in that particular type of sphere. And what we now have is the highways being maintained by the private sector. And I am saying today, I want to compliment those involved for the work being done from the airport to the seaport to all the way in the north. The shoulders of - that's not the official term, but along the highways - the levees are now being beautifully maintained. And I want to applaud the persons involved in delivering that.

The only part that the NCC maintains is the University Village or hill from down at the junction all the

way to Warrens. And they maintain that. But I'm saying it is a good quantum forward for us to begin to incorporate the support and the participation of the private sector in helping to maintain our island. Because our island is not the DLP's island. It is not the BLP's island. It is the island of all of us. And therefore we applaud those who are willing to support it. We have some private sector people now who are going to the botanical gardens identifying spaces that they want, and they are now helping us plant out those spaces and putting the appropriate signage on them. We are now getting on board some help to build out the national park system and, under the direction of the Natural Heritage Department, in moving forward on that - this is what the government is doing. And all we're saying is this, that we can no longer expect the government to pay for everything. But we have to bring people on board who are willing to be part and parcel of the maintenance of this island. Because at the end of the day Barbados belongs to all of us and not just some of us. And that's the point that I wish to make.

And then there's the marine side of the NCC's work and the area that they also charge fees. Now Folkestone Marine Park, established through an Act of Parliament, the Marine Areas Preservation and Enhancement Barbados Marine Reserve Regulation 1981. Today Folkestone Marine Park is the only legislatively protected area on the island. And the area has been designated as a marine protected area chosen to conserve marine resources and to enable the prevention of the removal of marine organisms, except for marine purposes. So Folkestone has some very beautiful species of reef fish. They have some very beautiful species of coral. It is an area where a lot of marine research is being done. And it is an area which the National Conservation Commission manages in terms of security.

We are now working on a second site, one here at Bay Street where we are now drafting the appropriate legislation to have that area - part of that area - quarantined as well. The reason why this is important is because there's also a lot of recreation, marine-based recreational activities occurring in these areas. And we have to try to keep a separation between those activities and the marine park. And CERMES from the University has been working with us, helping us to preserve it.

Now we know that marine reserves are not uncommon to this effort. Australia has one of the most storied marine reserves in the world. And it has become a source, a potent source of revenue. It has also become a source of research and it is very tightly guarded and reserved. And now that we are reopening Folkestone, we are reopening Folkestone with a brand new focus in terms of building out that reserve space there. Now there is pot fishing that goes on in the area, but it is pot fishing that is done under strict guidelines. And I've indicated recently

that the siege season is done. I've said recently that we need to step up our activities in terms of the preservation of that particular space. It is a tourist diving area where many of our tourists go there to snorkel and so on and so forth and some of the most beautiful reef fish you'll find on the island, you'll find there in the reserve as well.

We also have there, of course, in the coastal habitat, we have the reefs, patch reefs, we have the endangered hawksbill turtle nesting sites, and we also have some rare mangrove ecosystems in that area as well. And the park also, as I said before, provides for scientific research, water sports activities, recreational activities. So we are going to continue to work towards building that space out because we've identified that space as one of the spaces where we can benefit significantly in terms of revenue generation. And the Commission has had a close relationship with Bellairs Research Institute over the years with regards to the research undertaken in the park. And this has proved to be quite beneficial to the Commission and also to the University of the West Indies.

Of course, you know that the University of the West Indies is a very staunch partner with the Government of Barbados on the green economy. And for example, our green economy scoping study was a partnership between - or among, I should say - the University of the West Indies, the Government of Barbados and the United Nations Environment Programme. We are hoping to take the result of that scoping study to Cabinet very shortly and inviting Cabinet to have it laid in Parliament shortly thereafter. But it is a landmark piece of research that was done in partnership with these institutions and a very important piece of work that has been done also in that regard.

So the earnings from this space are promising. And it must be noted that fees collected will be used to maintain the marine park at the international standards for such parks. Further, Mr. Speaker, sir, the work being undertaken by the Coastal Zone Management Unit with the establishment of the boardwalk on the west coast has enhanced this open window to the sea. Because now you can actually walk all the way up in that area on the boardwalk and enjoy an inspection or interaction with that particular space. I don't know if you've gone down there since the boardwalk has been constructed, but it is a most beautiful piece of work being done there that has, of course, a climate change function as well as a recreational function. In that regard, we talked about the social benefits and why it is important

to have the National Conservation Commission up and running at its fullest. We talked about recreation, health and fitness, social interaction, cohesion in communities and an escape from stress and strain that can occur in some communities. It is an educational institution that helps us spawn educational activities, our parks. Now,

we are retrofitting some of our sites, some of our parks, with Wi-Fi so that when you go and sit down as a student to relax in the park, you can also do your work. You can also hook up to the web, to the net, and you can have activities going on there. And that is one of the things that we have been working on with the telecommunication companies and trying to get that built out as best as we can.

Physical activities help children in terms of their development, not only intellectually but physically. And children are allowed to explore and exploit their motor skills and have a place that is a protected place where they can go and run around and so on and so forth. Social, interpersonal, psycho-emotional activities also occur in our parks and other activities that we could not mention in here. But we know that parks are noted for these kinds of - I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. James North would know - softer activities where you can go, if you do not want to go home to your house, you can go there, stop off and, you know, have a bread and fish, a cheese cutter, a fruity and relax.

But we try to make our parks safe. And we are now trying to build out solar lighting through our parks to ensure that they are well lit, that the time frame for occupation of the parks is strictly followed. Our parks normally close at 10 o'clock in the evening. And we want to make sure that we maintain safe areas since most of these parks are in communities and so on and so forth. And we want to use our work in the Commission to create an environment where perhaps our children spend less time before the television, less time before the video games, and spend more time in open spaces.

When I was growing up, not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, sir, we spent a lot of time outdoors. You know, we played football, cricket, we pitched marbles. You know, there is not a lot of marble pitching anymore. We used to go by the cashew trees and get cashew seeds and pitch for cashews. And there would not be a moment during a given week when we did not spend time roasting breadfruit and getting some mellow cream, butter and so on, making lemonade and growing up as a collective and not in isolation.

Nowadays, children from next door do not really know the children who live a house down the road. And when you go to school nowadays, the school environment now has cliques. So if you are not a part of that clique, for whatever reason and whatever the label is, you do not get to interact with those people. And I am saying that we have to encourage our families. We hear a lot about families nowadays in the community and what families are not doing and what families should be doing to protect their children from violence and all of this kind of stuff. I keep making the point, Mr. Speaker, sir, that most of the parents now of school-age children are just a little older than those

kids themselves. When I was growing up, I grew up with parents and grandparents and aunts who were generations removed from where I was. And now you have mothers who are just over the adolescent years raising children. Part of their challenge is to find an identity and to fit themselves in the society.

And I am saying that what we have to do is to ensure that we build a society where there are areas owned by the society where persons can find the time to get together and to recreate, to fellowship. And once upon a time, every church in the community had an excursion. You remember those days. And you would gather at some park. And growing up in St. Andrew, you could not have an outing, as the old ladies would call it, unless you went to Seawell Airport. You had to go to King George V at the time when the facility in there was swinging. People from St. Philip would know - come down to the Seawell Airport. All you used to get to do is to go and stand up on your little gallery and wave. But that was the activity under the almond tree, you understand? So I am saying that we must treat these institutions with some measure of importance. And I implore my Government that we continue to build out these spaces and empower these institutions to provide for the society what the society used to enjoy, perhaps in a more informal way then, but equally important today.

The Commission is also moving ahead and, as I said, it is making its contribution to tourism. It has one of the most vibrant lifeguard services anywhere in the region. And if you doubt me, go to some of the popular beaches in Montego Bay, go to some of the more popular beaches in mainland Jamaica, go to some of the most popular beaches in Guyana. And you will not find the kind of lifeguard services that you will find here in Barbados. There are 20 beaches across the island that have facilities with highly trained staff - staff who meet the Royal Life Saving Society certification, an international certifying body. And over the years, including recently when we lost some of our lifeguards to Government seeking to right-size the public service, we still have not had an escalation in drownings. And that has to be noted because I remember some of the naysayers saying, oh Lord, they stay at home, all the lifeguards, everybody can drown out. The truth of the matter is that most Barbadians - I still believe that more Barbadians use our beaches than tourists. And that is an important point. And most Barbadians can swim. On any given Sunday, you will find most of our popular beaches heavily populated and mostly with ordinary people from their communities.

And I make the point that certainly the National Conservation Commission has been doing its work. It is now training ordinary people in techniques of lifeguarding. The JCS of Barbados is one of the volunteer services that contribute to this particular area. And the introduction of lifeguard towers at some of the popular beaches continues

to provide a service for that. And I must also say that the BTI has been a strong partner in working with our ranger service and overall with the Commission in ensuring that these services are provided.

The NCC also manages the Oistins Bay Gardens complex, which was handed over to the Commission by the Barbados Tourism Investment, Inc. And Oistins is noted as one of the most popular sites in Barbados, particularly for tourists, local cuisine, general local atmosphere and so on. I know from time to time that there have been some challenges there in terms of maintenance, and we are working to have those challenges obviated. And I know that from time to time there have also been some challenges with some of the vendors there. And we are also working to have those challenges obviated. But it is certainly one of those areas that we manage which is an important part of the stop when the tourist comes through the island. And of course, the scores and scores of locals, hundreds of locals, who occupy a space there for recreation and so on from time to time.

The economic contribution - the Commission, by virtue of its Act, has the authority to charge fees for the services provided. Over the past 15 years, the Commission has generated the sum of \$35 056 559 in revenue. And of course, this all goes towards offsetting the cost of operations and maintenance. And the Ministry of Finance has been working with us in helping us to continue to billow our revenue streams so that we can reduce the size of the transfer from that Ministry too. Primary contributors to this revenue have been the Commission's plant nursery and garden centre, where they are doing a thriving business, particularly on the weekends, the maintenance of properties and the rental of properties. To a lesser extent, Folkestone Marine Park and the Interpretive Centre have also made a contribution in that regard. The introduction of user fees for Folkestone Marine Park and the increase in fees charged for the Interpretive Centre will make a significant contribution to the Commission's revenue-earning capacity.

With respect to the plant nursery, the Commission has now established a tissue culture laboratory that will allow for the propagation of a great number of plants that are difficult to produce through the normal budding and grafting process. And also, I should add, some of the exotic plants that are not common to Barbados - they are now doing that there. The lab will also allow for research on plants to be conducted, thereby expanding the range of plants that can be offered for sale to the public. It will also provide employment opportunities for trained professionals in the natural and biological sciences to find some employment there as well.

Years ago you would not have heard of any tissue culture lab in the same context as the NCC. But I am

saying that when you do your comparative analysis of the NCC against other similar institutions around the world, what you will see is that the NCC is moving on an international standard trend that will allow it to be a first-world institution relative to conservation of terrestrial and marine spaces on the island. But we go further and we note that the fees collected have also allowed us to transform our environment where we are now pushing renewable energy, water management including recycling, climate change mitigation activities, biodiversity activities and debt certification activities.

The Commission over the past five years has embarked on an alternative energy programme which has seen nine facilities of the NCC being equipped with 2.5 kilowatt power solar systems. The Wanap Bay Street is now totally powered by renewable energy and we are working our way around our substantive facilities to have that done. This work has been done in conjunction with the Energy Division in the Ministry of Energy and we continue to bear further. A system has been installed at Codrington Headquarters which provides alternative power to approximately 60 per cent of our security lighting.

So we are talking about an institution that has become more nimble. We are talking about an institution that is becoming more efficient. But efficiency is not simply about cutting staff or cutting back on services. Efficiency is driven by finding new ways of doing old things. And those new ways must become more efficient ways of performing those particular tasks. So if you go to Codrington at night, you know that Codrington has any number of lights up there because of what is maintained at the property and so on and so forth. And now 60 per cent of that lighting system is renewable energy. The tissue culture laboratory at Codrington Headquarters is also fully powered by solar, inclusive of lights, equipment and air conditioning. And you know, of course, that if you are dealing with a tissue culture lab, which is a very sensitive area with very sensitive plants at the early stages of incubation, the environment has to be kept at a certain temperature. And now rather than using electricity as we know it to power those systems, those systems are now being powered by solar energy.

And again, I applaud the staff there. With respect to water management, they have installed 10 000-gallon water tanks to capture rainwater and in turn the water is used for irrigation of the plant nursery and the grounds at Codrington. This is what is happening at the NCC. Our toilets and washroom facilities have been retrofitted with low-flush toilets which reduce the amount of water being used by 50 per cent already. And what we will also ensure is that we have those water-efficient fixtures so that when you turn on water, the water does not run until you turn it off - the water turns off itself at intervals to ensure that it is saving some of the water there. I know that in the Ministry

of Agriculture, in the markets, that has been a discussion in getting some of those water devices at that level of efficiency to save the gallons of water which is being used of necessity at these facilities.

We talk about the tree planting programme, we talk about Arbor Day, which the NCC has resurrected, and we talk about planting of trees across the island. Let me touch quickly on the apiary. Now if you say apiary, some people do not even know what you are talking about. But the Commission has established an apiary project at its headquarters three years ago. And I encourage you to take a tour and go and see this facility. I know that the Honourable Leader of Government Business is hoping that I would go ahead quickly and define what is an apiary. So I will do that for your benefit, sir.

The facts on the apiary include this: the educating and informing of the public on the importance of the role of bees - and by that I mean honeybees - the role they play in our existence. I was watching a PBS programme recently on an apiary in North America and they said that the bee industry there is a multi-billion dollar industry and it works hand in hand with agriculture and the other related industries. The using of honeybees in the pollination of the plant propagation programme. It is used for providing learning opportunities for students and others. Building a number of active hives on the compound where students, service clubs and the public are invited to view the apiary and assist greatly in reducing the general fear of bees.

Now I do not know if you observe this with me, but I noticed in recent years in Barbados that you were actually seeing fewer bees - again, honeybees - and it was showing in the types of gardens that you were observing in communities. Bees and butterflies. But when I observed further - and I observed these things, I grew up in the country - I noticed that the black cow bee is practically gone. The brown bumblebee, I noticed that is also very - I have not seen one of those in years. The yellow jacket - y'all remember the yellow jacket? That bee that would sting you and make you call your mother? Commonly popular in Christ Church, in St. Philip. I noticed that those bees - I have not seen one of those. And they used to make these mock hives, and when you disturb them, they will terrorise you. I noticed that they were out.

Now I also know that there has been an international bee disease that has been threatening the populations. I know that for a fact. So what the NCC decided to do, since there is this important link between the pollination of plants that impacts on all agricultural sectors, they decided that they would create an apiary at the Commission site. They work closely with the Barbados Agricultural Society. They work closely with the Inter-American Institute on Cooperation in Agriculture. And they are really making waves in this particular area so that most of their plants

now in the nursery are being pollinated by their own bees right there. Plus they are also making honey at Codrington. I do not know if it is for sale yet, but I know that they are doing that and they are working with other bee specialists on the island and creating that kind of environment.

So it is a journey, Honourable Members, that we are on and I really want to applaud the Commission for its work, for its emphasis, for looking into the science area and making sure that it continues to do its work. We must complete the transformation of this institution. We must be looking at transforming the perception and expectations associated with the NCC. We must look at improving the services offered by the Commission, at continuing the expansion of the services and facilities of the Commission. We must build an efficient and productive workforce, have a modernised and fully functional equipment stock, increase our participation and contribution to the national goal of becoming the greenest economy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I believe in achieving these particular markers we must be moving to a place where our narrative includes highlighting our core certainty - that is, building a first-world institution. And that requires, Mr. Speaker, having a coalition of the willing, especially in the workforce, clearly defining a set of guiding core values. Our financial and human resources must be commensurate with our objectives and targets for the organisation. We must become an efficient and nimble institution and have a long-term vision of becoming a self-sufficient organisation that must include maximising the economic value of our assets, reducing our dependence upon high-cost inefficient inputs, fully utilising renewable energy where possible and reducing wastage in the areas of energy and water usage.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we are on the right track with this institution and to make sure that we set everything in order. This validation order is now presented to this Honourable House and I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Secunder. Thank you. Yes, Honourable Member.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, Mr. Speaker, to lend my voice to the National Conservation Commission validation of fees bill for 2015. I would want to say that the last speaker, the Member for Christ Church East, certainly gave a very wide discussion on the ministry which he shadows. I think it was particularly beneficial to hear all of the various things which are happening within said ministry, certainly in particular in relation to the National Conservation Commission. I know that this is a matter that really is a simple matter for the validation order. But I think it was important to have an update as to what is happening in a

ministry which I consider to be very critical certainly to the beautification and development of this island.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I heard the Honourable Minister state that his ministry rather is on the verge of charting a new direction. Certainly with all the various financial cuts, certain decisions have had to be made to make the entity more profitable. I am mindful that the National Conservation Commission would have suffered a severe blow, as did other ministries in the last budget in 2013 in relation to budgetary cuts for that particular division. And we would have seen a reduction of some 6 million to the National Conservation Commission which no doubt, if we are attempting to revamp the ministry, would certainly have caused the Honourable Minister to have certain challenges in being able to meet the various targets for the ministry. Now, we would have heard from the Minister of Finance that it was necessary to make those cuts in the National Conservation Commission and also the wider cuts because of the financial instability of the country, not just at that time, but certainly ongoing.

And we would be aware that a critical entity such as the National Conservation Commission, responsible for the preservation of not only our parks or beaches, but also our historical sites, having such a drastic cut to the ministry would no doubt impact on not only the employees, but certainly impact on our physical landscape. And so, Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are things happening in the ministry and I certainly, as I said, applaud the Minister for the things which he has highlighted. But I do have some questions or concerns which I hope that the Honourable Minister may be able to address in his wrap-up, or perhaps because this area touches on so many other ministries within the cabinet, that perhaps some of the other ministers responsible may be able to address those as well.

And I start there because I am well aware that the responsibility for parks and beaches in Barbados ties fundamentally into the area of tourism. It ties into it in such a way that when we speak of tourism, we know that tourism is the lifeblood for the Barbadian economy. If at any point in time the physical landscape of this country falls into a state where we do not have our physical locations properly maintained, then it certainly is a reflection on us as a society. It has a negative impact on what tourists come here to see. Wider than that, it has an impact on our people. Because if we have clean surroundings, certainly our people will look after those surroundings. When however we see, because of budgetary cuts, that our surroundings somehow fall into disrepair, again you see a lot of people not taking as much pride in the surroundings that befall them.

And so I have some concerns with respect to some of the parks, the beaches around the island, that enough perhaps is not being done in relation to working with the

other ministries to be able to ensure that, for instance, garbage is collected in a timely manner. We well know that people are finding themselves more and more at the beach, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East indicated. And we have seen an explosion in a sense of persons recreating in that way. It therefore would be my suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that we perhaps invest a bit more in ensuring that there are enough garbage bins in those facilities. But not just providing the garbage bins, Mr. Speaker, but also ensuring that there is a regular collection of the garbage at those facilities.

Now, I held a Back to School picnic at Folkestone, just before the last semester. It was a community picnic with some of the residents from the St. Michael South East constituency. And we were looking at various areas and we decided to take several of the children and staff to Folkestone for activity. I must say that the staff at Folkestone were very receptive, they were very accommodating, and I would wish, through the Minister, to thank them for the assistance which they did indeed give to myself and also to all of the participants who attended the event. One of the concerns, however, that I recognised on that particular day when we went - it was a Sunday morning and we had been advised to make sure that we got there in a timely manner, because you would certainly find a number of persons engaging in picnic activities on that particular day - was that sometimes the collection of garbage becomes a concern for them. And I know obviously the Member for Christ Church East also has that under his portfolio. And I would hope that perhaps within the ministry, perhaps we can take a look, not just at Folkestone, but also across the board, to ensure that there is a regular garbage collection.

Now, I know that is one incident, and as I said, I spoke to other persons. I spoke to the staff because it was of concern to us because we had young children on the site. It was of concern to us because we had elderly people there as well. But we had to take the opportunity to bring garbage bags to start to clean up the areas where even we wanted to put down our tents. And we saw other picnic-goers also doing the same thing in order to have enough space and a clean area within which to accommodate them. So I would ask the Honourable Minister just to look into those things. It is not enough just to put down the bins, but I do believe that we have to ensure that we have a regular collection of garbage at our parks, our beaches, or places of national interest.

One of the things that I believe Barbados has prided itself on for several years is its ability to have a clean environment. It is something that in recent times I certainly have had concerns about. For instance, at football events, at cricket events, sometimes you do not have a regular collection of the garbage either. And those are within communities as well. So you have a situation where we

want to encourage our tourists, we want to encourage our communities to engage and to participate in the facilities available. But they are confronted with issues of pollution, the overgrowth of bush. We have situations where the garbage cans are overflowing with garbage. And it is not that the garbage cans or the facilities have not been provided in many cases. It is simply that the regular collection often does not happen.

You have a similar situation down by the Arrow Bar park, which is in the constituency of St. Michael South East as well. Sometimes you find that it is a park of national interest, but it is a well-traversed area as well for persons trying to make their way from the Pine East West Boulevard onto the Wildey area. And you would find sometimes that for several weeks there is an overgrowth of bush in that particular part. There is also an absence of a lot of the garbage cans. So again, I make the point that it is important that there is regulation that exists within the National Conservation Commission, but also that there is discussion with the other departments that are going to help the National Conservation Commission to be able to effectively carry out its role.

I also want to touch on the connection with the NCC and also the Ministry of Tourism because of all the plans that I heard the Member for Christ Church East allude to. What I did not hear was the linkage between the tourism sector and certainly a lot of the projects that are either ongoing or to come on stream. Now, one of the things that we are very good at in this society is talking about things that are about to happen or saying that we have things in place. But I believe that often one of our serious deficiencies is that we lack the ability to market and promote some of the facilities that we have. And it is not a case of just marketing them to tourists, but it is also ensuring that the work that is being done is also known by the locals in Barbados. Because of all of the work that has been mentioned, it would be useful if more was heard of the Botanical Society, for instance, and the work that it was doing, because it seems as though it is now a well-guarded secret as to what is happening there. And I think that perhaps if there are any funds that could be allocated to allowing the NCC and others to be able to promote it as a site of interest, perhaps consideration should be given to that by the Honourable Minister.

I also note, Mr. Speaker, that you have a situation developing where there are a number of open spaces that the Honourable Minister would have alluded to where persons and communities are encouraged to approach the NCC to be able to have spaces created for recreation. Now, again, while this may not be a direct National Conservation Commission issue, I do believe that yet again this is an issue that requires intervention by other ministries to be able to address this long-standing problem. And the problem, Mr. Speaker, that we are experiencing in a

number of communities is the fact that we are seeing an increase in our population. We are seeing an increase in the number of persons who are residing in various developments across Barbados. But I do not believe that we are also seeing the research and the planning that is necessary to identify where we need to develop open spaces and whether open spaces that once were good enough in the 1970s are now good enough today for the residents in those communities.

I represent one of the most densely populated areas in the St. Michael constituencies. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that apart from a few of the sporting facilities, apart from the Arrow Bar park, because we are within the centre of the island in a sense, we do not have a number of the parks and so-called beaches that those who have constituencies on the west coast and the south coast would perhaps have greater access to. And therefore, I believe that it requires agencies like the NCC, the National Housing Corporation, working in conjunction with even the National Sports Council, to have a dialogue regarding the development of these areas within communities. Because I am sure a number of the members on both sides would experience this - where there are always persons in communities asking for an area to be developed so that the youngsters can have an area to recreate, so that the elderly persons can have somewhere to be able to play a game of dominoes.

It is a trend that is developing. Some people call it the block culture. Some people say the youngsters are liming. I say, sir, that it is a response and a reaction to a lack of facilities in communities that I believe, as any administration, we must address as a matter of urgency. Where we recognise people are liming, perhaps we need to stop and ask ourselves why. It may not only be a case of unemployment, but it may also be a case of overcrowded housing which is forcing persons to stay out of the household because there are not enough rooms in the household for them to be able to feel comfortable. And therefore, if it is that we are not developing our community centres fast enough to be able to embrace all ages and all age groups, then perhaps we need to look at creating a number of other park facilities within communities as well.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that oftentimes we do not hear about those intersectoral linkages between ministries. I do also believe that by creating those open spaces and developing them into areas for recreation, you not only work on the issues of crime, because if you are able to engage people in communities, either to clean up the areas or to develop them as spaces which people can appreciate, they are more likely to care for the area than if you just leave it overgrown with bush.

Now, I am mindful that this Government will say - and I have had the response from various ministries when I

have called - that various equipment is not working. It could be that the sanitation trucks have broken down. It could be that the equipment from the National Sports Council, the machines to cut the grass and the playing fields, they are not working. Or that they do not have enough staff because the Government has sent home over 3 000 persons. I understand all of that. But what I do say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a responsibility, if we are going to cut on the one hand, to also be at the same time thoroughly planning out what our next step is going to be. It is not enough to allow everything to simply fall apart, realise that it is going to fall apart and simply do nothing. Because I believe that I am seeing the crumbling of our society at various levels. Because in a lot of cases we are not providing a lot of the facilities to engage people away from criminal activity as well. So I believe that the Attorney General, perhaps in conjunction with the National Housing Corporation and the National Conservation Commission, need to engage in a dialogue regarding things like that, reviewing the physical landscape of communities and perhaps aggressively addressing the issues that are now plaguing several of our communities.

It also, Mr. Speaker, has an impact on the health of our citizens when we address issues of increasing open spaces and turning them into recreational areas. We have a number of people suffering with chronic non-communicable diseases. A number of our people need to be exercising. A number of our people need to be walking. A number of our people need to be keeping fit. We can no longer simply rely on just the traditional areas that we have come to know for so many years and believe that those are the only areas that are going to be available to our people. Again, we need to look at our physical communities and be able to properly plan within those communities to take into account the ageing population, to take into account that as you age, you may not be able to make it and walk down to the beach as you may have done before. And therefore, if the parks are maintained in a proper way, you would be able to encourage persons to be able to utilise the facilities, to be able to engage in physical exercise. It also means, Mr. Speaker, that agencies like the drainage unit would have to be working very closely with the National Conservation Commission to ensure that again, our parks, our beaches, do not have the issues that many of us are aware they encounter. Because every time that we have heavy rainfall, we are often plagued not only with problems with our roads, but we also experience problems within our parks and also in relation to getting to some of our recreational facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I would want also to touch on the fact that having made the cuts that this administration has made within the last few years, it would be perhaps one way to start to apply all of our minds to how do we generate revenue for the National Conservation Commission. I say that, sir, because in other countries overseas you have seen

trends developing - for instance, whether it is in the UK, Europe, or America - where agencies have started to sell off parks because the government has recognised that it may be unable to maintain the parks and the beaches across their communities. And in most cases it is the parks that they have been, in a sense, trying to privatise. Sir, it also means that we have to look at persons who may wish to donate financially towards assisting with the upkeep of these various areas.

Now, I heard the Honourable Minister address the issue of the beautification along the highway, and I would agree that has made some significant changes to the physical landscape along the highway. But I would go so far as to say, sir, that it is important that you hear the cries echoed by a number of people in this country that oftentimes you will see the bushing taking place in the country when something is happening, when there is a national event, when there is a heads of government conference - you start to see a hive of activity taking place across the length and breadth of Barbados along the roads and along the routes where persons are going to traverse who are coming from overseas. Simply because we want to put on a good show. We want to look the part. We want to appear as though we are preserving our natural environment and that we are doing so in a way that those persons who travel along those roads can see that Barbados is doing its part. But I say, sir, you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. And there comes a time where with limited resources, you also have to look at dealing with the inner areas and ensuring that those areas are also properly cleaned, that those areas are thoroughly debushed and that those areas are able to service the citizens of this country as well.

I am well aware that in places, for instance, across the United Kingdom, the government there has looked at even the rental of cafes and restaurants at their parks. We have a few of those models already existing in Barbados, and I do believe that perhaps we need to start to look at a few more. Not only will it encourage, sir, the entrepreneurship culture, where persons who may be able to ply their trade may be able to work in kiosks along the beaches, but it also creates another space for our tourists as well to be able to frequent. There were some concerns a few months ago, I believe, where there needed to be regulation of a young entrepreneur who would have set up a massage business in a truck and went to ply their trade at Accra. Now, I believe the issue has been resolved because I see the vehicle situated at Accra on location still. So I believe that whatever the issues were in relation to having a licence or whatever, those issues have been resolved. But the initial reaction, Mr. Speaker, was one that I believe was unfortunate, because I think that we as a society, and even as this Government, have to recognise that times are changing, that the typical kiosk that we may have been accustomed to in our culture - other people are now finding

innovative ways to ply their trade. And if it is that the business plies its trade in the back of a truck, then perhaps we need to make the relevant accommodation within the ministry and within the Civil Service to be able to accommodate those new ventures. Because it is okay to speak about entrepreneurship, but we have to be able to accept the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship does not take the same form all the time, and persons who want to be able to venture to do things differently have to be able to find some comfort that not that the law will bend, but that there will be some accommodation to take into account the development of these new areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NCC, from my understanding, has a responsibility for the conservation of natural beauty. And one of the things that has concerned me over the last few months certainly was the issue of sargassum seaweed along our coastlines. Now, I appreciate that the Honourable Minister has stated that he has invested in two pieces of equipment at a cost of \$615 000 to assist with not just the sargassum seaweed, but any potential oil spill. Now, I would hope that the cost of removing the seaweed was not so ridiculously high because it would have caught us all, I suppose, by surprise. But I do believe that what it should have taught us is not just that we need to purchase the equipment, but that perhaps even within the National Conservation Commission and other agencies, we need to also have a research component that allows us to be able to examine and to look at the possibilities of our vulnerability as a small island. Because it is not enough simply to just respond to the problem on each occasion. We as a society have to start to be a bit more proactive.

A lot of times when you look at the legislation that we pass in this chamber, there may or may not be from time to time a component which speaks to departments having a research component. I ask each of those on the other side how much of that research component is actually being utilised today. Because a lot of times we are asked to make decisions on legislation or to make changes without the actual statistics, or in some cases the statistics are so old upon which we are asked to make a determination that it is almost as though we are carrying out an exercise in futility. We are making assumptions when really we could be utilising our staff to be able to do the investigation, to inform certainly this chamber and our citizens.

I would be interested to hear what the maintenance on the equipment will cost. I ask that, not to be facetious, but I do feel that again it is an investment which I agree would be necessary, provided it is the correct equipment. Because we have well known that sometimes the wrong equipment gets ordered and then this administration has to pay for another set of equipment to come into the island. But that notwithstanding, I would hope that there is a budget set aside for the maintenance of that equipment. We cannot foresee the sargassum seaweed and when it will

necessarily come. But the research I am speaking about is what to do if we are faced with a problem like that again, and not to have the public guessing as to what is happening, but to really be a bit more proactive in getting communities to come out and assist, getting persons to understand what are the potential ways in which sargassum seaweed can be used, and perhaps engaging in some kind of scientific research - if it is not available on the island - but being able to work with persons overseas to see what it is that we could do if something like this happens again. So I would hope that the Honourable Minister and his ministry would certainly be looking at that area as well.

Now, recently, Mr. Speaker, it was disclosed a couple of weeks ago that there was a potential threat to the south coast because of issues with the sewerage project. I raise that, Mr. Speaker, because of my concerns for the health of the workers who are with the National Conservation Commission, who may be engaged in any cleanup along the south coast. Now, I am aware that someone in one of the ministries would have spoken to the issue of a committee being set up, a multidisciplinary committee being set up to avert a possible health crisis. Now that is a crisis that could perhaps touch on the lives of all Barbadians. But again, if we are speaking about the NCC, I believe a word of reassurance would be wise at this time to the workers. Also to the hoteliers along the coast who stand to be affected if action is not taken in a timely manner. Because that report, Mr. Speaker, would have revealed that the system was virtually non-functioning for over a year. It would have revealed that over 90 per cent of the sewage entering the plant was being diverted from the influent pumps to the effluent pumps. There are persons who have to work on those beaches. There are people who use those beaches - ordinary Barbadians, sir, like you and me, that use those beaches. I happen to live on the south coast. I utilise the beach and therefore I have concerns about it.

It is not that fingers are to be pointed at a minister in the course of this debate on this issue. I, sir, wish to make it abundantly clear that matters that concern Barbadians are of concern and must be of concern to all of us. Anything that threatens the health of this country must be a concern to us regardless of which side of the political divide we may happen to fall. It does not matter that it was the Leader of the Opposition that would have disclosed that information. It does not matter that it was a member of the other side that would have reported on this and sent a letter to the Barbados Water Authority since May and that had that disclosure not been made, that members on the other side would not have spoken up about it. That is water under the bridge. What is important, Mr. Speaker, is that the workers who have to work on those beaches, the people who go to the sea, that those persons are given an assurance that this committee that has been set up is able to report not three months from now, but perhaps provide regular

updates to the citizens of this country as to what is happening. Because it does not sit well with me that we just simply hear a committee has been set up. You may want to pass the blame on the Barbados Labour Party. You throw the blame all over, but it does not take away from the serious nature of what it is that still has to be addressed. So I would ask whether it is the minister who has led this debate or if it is the Minister of Health, whoever, to be able to at least speak to the issue in a way that gives assurance, certainly to the workers within the National Conservation Commission, but also to all of us, that the matter is being put to rest.

Now, two other matters, sir, that attract my attention in relation to this matter. I have not heard the Honourable Minister speak to the level of revenue-raising measures that the National Conservation Commission is now able to generate in light of the cuts that have been made by the Ministry of Finance in the 2013 budget. And I think it is critical that we hear about the revenue-generating measures, particularly since this administration has touted that there will be restructuring of various government agencies in an effort to reduce the overall cost of government. So if it is that we are expected to believe that this Government is on the right trajectory, I believe that an explanation, every time one of the ministers on the other side stands up, should be given to this country as to how the revenue-saving measures are impacting on their revenue. I believe that explanation, sir, is owed to each and every one of us. You cannot, on the one hand, send home over 200 employees of the National Conservation Commission and then come to this chamber and list a number of things that are being done without a single word as to how much money that department has actually saved by these measures. Is it that by sending home 200 people we are now able to pay for all of these things that the Honourable Minister has alluded to in his presentation? Or is it that we are seeing serious returns coming,

coming from making what the honourable administration, the Government of Barbados has said have been necessary because the 200 workers that have gone home also need to be assured that the right measures have been taken to address this current economic crisis that Barbados faces. We would have seen 300 from NHC going home. We would have seen 100 from the Drainage Division, which also falls under the Honourable Minister. So I don't think that it is enough to simply list the various things that have been achieved within the Ministry, perhaps within the last few months, without giving a deeper explanation to the people of this country, particularly the ones who have been laid off by this administration in the way that they were laid off, so that we can have some comfort, perhaps, that those measures that were taken were indeed and in fact necessary in light of the crisis that we face.

I believe too that the Honourable Minister could have spent some time again being sympathetic with those workers who have not had their matters heard before the tribunal. He has no control over the tribunal. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have persons from all of our constituencies who have been affected, who have been laid off as a result of the slash of workers from the National Conservation Commission, whilst the reassurance is given that people are using the beaches as usual. We did have a problem before when the initial layoffs were done, that there were concerns about the lifeguards at the various beaches and that they were not adequate to service the number of persons. Because people don't drown does not mean that we are adequate in our numbers. If people drowned, you will suddenly hear that perhaps there was an inadequacy. So I don't take comfort in hearing that we haven't heard of anyone drowning recently on any of the beaches, and therefore we are doing all that we can in terms of deploying our human resources to those facilities. I do believe that better can be done. If we acknowledge that persons are using our beaches and they are using them more frequently, then we have to ensure that we have the adequate number of persons attending to those facilities at every single opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I started by saying I didn't want to detain this Chamber in any lengthy way. We on this side are not in disagreement with the Validation of Fees Bill. And so, Mr. Speaker, I support the efforts made by the Minister, but I do wish that he would address some of the questions that I have asked. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I too enter this debate. And unlike the Honourable Member who sat just now, I can see wonderful opportunities occurring for those persons who now have widened opportunities. And that is that those ambitious young people, after listening to the Minister this morning, would know that there are now new economic attitudes and conditions to be had in Barbados.

It is rather interesting that as in this world, as we speak to climate change and we speak to environment, that an enlightened government as far back as the 1970s recognised and put on the world map the whole concept of environment. Because when the Democratic Labour Party formed the Parks and Beaches Commission at that time, no one spoke about the environment. But when one recognises the activities that were occurring as far back as the 1970s, clearly we can accept that we were leaders in something that is now the buzzword around the world in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that Barbados has a role to play and we must stop deluding ourselves and stop pulling down ourselves without recognising that we are here to lead and that we are here to set examples for others to follow. Mr. Speaker, one must recognise that when a government spends money, it spends money not only for the development of the environment, but it spends money also for the creation of economic opportunities. And that is why I am always making the point that we must start seeing the national park not only as a park that can be seen for environmental reasons, but a park that must be seen for economic reasons. And if we are to develop our tourism - and I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael East saying that the Minister did not mention this - but this side has been speaking about this for a long time. And that is why we came up with the concept of community tourism. And when we speak about community tourism, this is exactly what we are speaking about. Developing the national parks so that the tourists and the locals alike can enjoy themselves and that the people living in the areas with improved services can use these areas as an economic tool.

So when the Honourable Member speaks to these matters, the Honourable Member should be aware that one of her comrades, when we first started speaking about community tourism, said that they are not interested in \$20 tours. The former Honourable Member of Tourism on the other side made that comment because they could not understand that for everything that you do, you do not use the top-down approach, but you use the bottom-up approach. That is, if you allow the children to come on holidays, when they grow up to be parents and so on, they will bring their children and there will be a flow. But they do not understand these social things because they are such high flyers that they do not understand what will impact on the masses of people in the country. They can only deal with lobsters and steaks and so on and leave the crumbs to fall from the table. So that is why they will come in here and make these pretty statements as if these poor people don't have a right to have an opportunity to eat from the economic pie of this country. And I am saying that this Government, yes, accepting that the environment is good, also appreciates that the environment is good for the beach vendors and all other persons that operate from the beach too. Because it is from there that the economic tool is really felt. Because when you empower the masses of people in the country, that mass sends the money right up. When you empower the top, it goes from the top into the treasury or into the Central Bank and it does not have the same multiplier effect.

And that is why the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East comes in here and gives the impression that all the environmental problems she spoke about were something that started with the Democratic Labour Party and are only occurring today. I want the Honourable

Member to understand that all the environmental problems that she spoke about - those problems were inherited from her government. When they had all the honey flowing, they went and built a primary plant in the heart of the tourism belt and now have the gall to come in here and talk about the fallout from a plant when it started from the beginning of the operation of that plant. So the Honourable Member must understand, if she doesn't understand what occurred before, she must do her research and then come in and speak in that tone after having the right information.

I have said to the Honourable Member for St. James North that if he continues in that attitude, I will not debate him. Because I have reminded him that there is a principle in this House that seniors don't debate juniors. And I say the same thing today to the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. Because if you come to this House and you are not going to reflect on what you have to say, do not expect me to debate you. I am not in here to train anybody. I am here to debate persons. So this attitude - this prior high attitude to this House, when you are ignorant of the facts that occurred in this House - you must understand, you must take your place and know your place in this place.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that this debate that we are dealing with will help us develop the RDC. The RDC is not only about roads and repairing our houses and so on. The RDC is about developing the rural areas and building out the national park. And people must understand this and not think that we are the only ones who understand that point. This is now being accepted all across the world. And we must understand that if it is accepted all over the world, that we are not followers but we are leaders. And that is exactly what is happening. Because we are leading in such a way that others have to follow what we are doing. Too often we believe that we must come and bring to Barbados everything that is being done by others without recognising that we have a contribution to make. We must appreciate that we are leaders. In 1970, when nobody in the world was talking about environment, Barbados was talking about the environment. When nobody was talking about community tourism, Barbados was talking about community tourism. So too often we do not pat ourselves on the back. Every time we come to this House we come with a concept of criticism and negativity. Let us lift ourselves and understand that we have a role to play and a distance to travel. And the road to travel is a road well lit as far back as the 1970s. We are over 40 years ahead of the world when it comes to environment. And that is why the Prime Minister can leave the country and get some of the recognition. We are not here to take the crumbs. We are here to develop the cake and for others to take the crumbs.

So don't come in here and believe that these things are things that we are now doing and we do not understand what we are doing. There is a relationship between parks

and tourism. We don't have to come and lecture on that. We have demonstrated it - why do you think those tour jeeps go right around Barbados? It is not by accident. It is because they have recognised that we have something in our parks, we have something in our rural areas to show the rest of the world. We have passed that stage since over 40 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I support the opportunity for people to get a piece of the cake and recognise that in order for us to develop tourism we must develop more sites across Barbados. And I must tell the Minister of Environment and I must also tell the Minister of Culture that we cannot ignore it, because there is a place in St. Lucy - one of the best parks that you can ever have in Barbados because of the size and the demographics - a park called Archers Bay, which as far back as the seventies the Honourable Errol Barrow acquired. And as far back as the 1970s there used to be as many as 40 buses going to Archers Bay. That shows the foresight of this side. And what we need now to do is not only have the stairs going on to Archers Bay and making the beach accessible, but we must now develop the national park right next to the beach.

And by the way, the people are very creative. Those 66 stairs that have been built were not only built apparently for people to get down to the beach - because previously they had to swing on a piece of rope to get down to that beach. What is happening now? The people are using the stairs to get to the beach and on a daily basis they are using the stairs to exercise. And the people in the village are gravitating and setting up their tables and selling to the tourists and those who come to picnic. Furthermore, there is a man from the Honourable Member for St. Michael East's constituency who is now building some apartments and a restaurant to capitalise on the opportunities. That man understands what is happening in rural Barbados. He moved his capital - and that is rather interesting, because on the world stage when I speak that in Barbados people move from urban to rural, they cannot understand that. But here is a good example. He moved from the city and goes to Archers Bay in St. Lucy to set up some apartments and a restaurant because he can see the opportunities.

And not only that - so far-sighted was the late Right Honourable Errol Barrow that you not only get at Archers Bay the opportunity to get a sea bath and an exercise and get some cultural uplift, but right next to it there is a playing field. So you can see the vision: when you buy a piece of land, you do not see one opportunity. When we buy a piece of land, we see many opportunities and exploit those opportunities in the interest of the masses of people. So the concept of doing things differently can be found over here. And those persons who hold an opportunity to do things differently should find an opportunity to join us and recognise that if you want change - revolutionary

change in the interest of your constituents - it is better to come to this side than to remain in the doldrums elsewhere.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say today that this debate is enlightening, that this debate is very revolutionary. And this debate offers opportunities for the masses of people to recognise that what they saw as a playing field is not a play - it is a business. And now we are creating other opportunities for them to take their business right across the national park and to join the economic value of this country, and by having the facilities so that they can now ply their trade across the national park of Barbados and get upliftment. Tourism is not only for the high flyers. Tourism is everybody's business and tourism is here for everybody to take a share of the cake. I thank you very much, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for lunch until 2.00 this afternoon.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: And I wanted to share a few thoughts, sir, on the contribution made by the Member for Christ Church East, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, during his presentation today. Mr. Speaker, I think that it would only be appropriate that one commended the Honourable Member for projecting the department, which we have come to know as the National Conservation Commission, in such a way as to enable the wider cross section of the Barbadian public to have a full and clear appreciation of the work which is being done by that department. I think, sir, that the issues of the mandate to manage and preserve the wider environment, and also, sir, the interesting developments with respect to matters relating to the botanical garden and more scientifically oriented developments, help us to understand that there is significant, significant thought being given at the policy level to where this department of government is going. And, Mr. Speaker, that is important because the opposition must not be understood to be about only opposing. This opposition, unlike many others throughout the course of history in this country, has been primarily about the development of Barbados. This opposition has, where it is necessary, been critical, but has always felt that we should come to this place and not only urge the government to share with the country any thoughts that it may have. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, you sit there and you endure much of - I suspect you endure rather than enjoy much of the debate in this House. And you, sir, would have heard firsthand that

very often the government is bereft of ideas virtually across the length and breadth of the Cabinet. So it is a happy day when we can hear a Minister stand in his place and indicate with some conviction, some force of conviction, that he has presided over a process which seems to have involved significant thought and that there is a variation of theme and that which we knew the Conservation Commission to have been in its early and primary stages is now changing and the Conservation Commission is going through a transformative phase. And I want to congratulate the Minister, sir, for being able to do that.

We must also understand that part of the challenge that faces Barbados and all small island developing states is about the duty, sir, for us to utilise the environment that we have in a manner that doesn't just cause us to confront the environment we have with fear at the challenges we face, but that we can utilise the environment so as to harness the opportunities that it gives us. We are, sir, a country which, located as we are, enjoying the climate that we enjoy, unfortunately, are also confronted with substantial environmental challenges. It is a matter of historical record, sir, that this region - Barbados has thus far been fortunate - but this region knows the experience of one devastating storm destroying the economy of an entire country, putting it into a position, sir, where for years it is unable to recover. We know, sir, in this region as well, the devastation that can be caused by one earthquake. We, sir, cannot scoff at the challenges that confront the small island developing states. And amongst us in this Parliament, sir, we should take the opportunity to recognise the work that is being done by the Right Honourable Prime Minister on these issues at an international level. And, sir, on the other hand, we also have to recognise the opportunity that is presented by the environment that we have.

We are now, sir, living in a different time. And I speak, sir, as one who has only been in the legislature of Barbados for 14 years. But we are enjoying a different time to the one that I understood and knew when I first came to this place. Back then, sir, 14 years ago, nobody in Barbados was talking in any significant way about wave energy and solar energy - where you talk about solar water heaters, but not solar energy in the context of photovoltaics and so on, as we now do. We are living in a transformative time, sir, and it is most appropriate that the National Conservation Commission, carrying the mandate that it has to carry, is able to be projected in a transformative manner. So for that aspect of the presentation by the Minister, sir, I wish to salute him.

I, however, sir, have to speak also about the question of the future development of this country. And while I think the Minister may have spoken substantively, there are still some issues which are of deep, deep concern for us on this side. And I think, sir, for the wider cross section of Barbadians as a whole. First among those issues, in my

judgment, Mr. Speaker, sir, is the fact that we must now see the potential of the National Conservation Commission as being an entity that can help to resolve some of the frustrating problems associated with governance in this country. One such issue, Mr. Speaker, is that fact which the Minister himself, representing Christ Church East as he does, must know exists in districts in Christ Church East, such as Gibbons and Chancery Lane and Wilcox and Elim Park. And indeed, sir, I know in St. James Central because I experienced the same thing in Bagatelle and in Prior Park and, Mr. Speaker, sir, in Hoyt's Terrace.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that these are middle class areas. And across Barbados you find it replicated in other middle class developments where people have invested a few hundred thousand dollars in order to get their piece of the rock - for most of us. Not all, because I look across at the Member for St. Michael North West. And he is a man who knows what it is, as indeed does his colleague in St. Philip West, to own several pieces of real estate. And for that we congratulate them. But for most of us in Barbados, sir, ownership of a piece of real estate is that which you aspire to. And where once you have been able to achieve it, you are happy, sir, and you fight to hold on to it and to defend with all that you have - defend with all that you have, sir, the value of that piece of property.

It is a difficult thing for the average person in Barbados, sir. But it is a difficult thing for the average person in Barbados to be confronted with a situation where your wife and yourself have invested in a home. The home may cost two or three hundred thousand dollars. And every day you do your best to maintain it. But through no fault of yours, the plot right next door remains empty. It is owned by somebody. But that body then chooses not to build upon it. And with the passage of time, the grass grows tall, the bush becomes unbearable. The insects and vermin that flow from that bush into your premises become intolerable. This is not one of those situations that the Minister would have spoken about when he talks about people getting vexed about the fact that there is a tree and they want to cut down the tree. This is people being inconvenienced by being forced to live in a situation where there is a large development and there are parts of the development which are owned by people who have chosen not to build on it, but equally choose not to maintain the development.

Now, Mr. Speaker, sir, as I said, we are keen on discussing solutions. The Minister, having started on the course he has gone and my having congratulated him for going that way, I wish, sir, to engage him. The Member for St. Lucy, sir, feels that seniors must not engage their juniors. I do not know that that is a school of thought that has ever prevailed in this Parliament. Had that been the case, nobody would have talked to the Member for St. Lucy throughout his career. Because even if he has been here for a long time chronologically, sir, I do not know that

in terms of contribution he has ever been viewed as a senior. But, sir, the reality is this. The National Conservation Commission, in my judgment, is excellently positioned through the resources that it possesses to be utilised by government to help resolve this age-old problem.

I say at the beginning, sir, that this has been a problem that has afflicted Barbadians now for several, several years. This is not a problem that now starts under this government. I don't want the Minister to be defensive about it. This is a problem, sir, that I first came to understand existed when I was a little fellow and Dr. Chetnam was the Member of Parliament for Christ Church East. And sir, that is many, many years ago under a completely different regime and administration. But sir, if we use the NCC to come in and clean up some of these bushy overgrown lots and then, that having been done, you attach the cost of that to the land tax bill of the owner who has been derelict in his duty to maintain the lot, then sir, I believe you go a long way towards bringing solution and resolution to this problem.

For far too long many people have suffered this. And I want to say this as well, sir. I think it is the Municipal Solid Waste Act - if that is the correct title of the piece of legislation that was passed here so as to facilitate the collection of municipal solid waste tax, now repealed - contemplated a course of action, sir, which is not far removed from what I am talking about. But sir, was not contemplated for the purpose of dealing with this issue. And I think, sir, that we have to try to do this. If a landowner has been notified that there is a problem with the fact that he is not maintaining the land and a period of time - a month or so - has passed and nothing has been done and then he is given a second notice, then I think, sir, that the burden has been discharged in law that he has been notified. Now that which he has a duty to maintain, he has not maintained. He does not - while he has a right to own the land, he does not have a right to have that land being a nuisance to his neighbours. And so therefore I think it is important for the state to find a solution. And this, as I say, has been a long-standing humbug and harassment. It is an irritant. I have spoken to the Member for St. James South. I know that he feels very strongly about it too. We in St. James, sir, have seen this as a public nuisance where people own pieces of land in developments. And in some of the developments in St. James - let us take Bagatelle for example. You can look at West Terrace too. In both of those developments you have over 300 houses. Easily, easily. But if in between there you have plots of land which are owned by somebody, but just harbouring bush and vermin and so on, then it serves to devalue the investment that everybody else has made. It makes their financial situation worse.

And what has also happened in Barbados, that we have to recognise, is that people of goodwill then go and take their gasoline and hire a little assistance and they go and cut the grass and maintain it and so on. But they are maintaining somebody else's lot free of cost to them. And obviously, when times get tougher economically, you cannot continue to do that because you are struggling to look after your own little piece. And, sir, if we have a resource like the National Conservation Commission, which has staff, it has equipment, it is doing good work in the relevant area, then, sir, it can be paid. It can be paid through the process of the cost of that service being attached to the owner's land tax bill. And I would want, sir, to throw that out to the House as being a potential solution for a problem, sir, that has gone on for too long in this country.

I, sir, want to speak also about the marine aspect of our environment. And again, I know that the National Conservation Commission has done excellent work in this area. But, sir, there are other issues that we have to look at. In Folkestone, for example, which is on the border of my constituency and that of the Member for St. James North, we have an issue. This is perhaps, I think, in terms of legislative designation and protection, the only properly defined marine park in Barbados. I believe that Bay Street is on its way to being treated in that way. I think I am correct in saying that I am the only Member of this House who is certified as being a master scuba diver. And I, therefore, sir, understand what Barbados looks like beneath the ocean. And, sir, the truth of the matter is we have a serious problem where the reefs of this country are dying.

And the fact is, sir, if this were like the United States of America, where you could come and put on a projector in the Congress so that the Parliament - the Congress over there - can see a visual of what you are talking about, sir, you know, you can dive on some reefs in Barbados and you find sofas, you find telephones, you find household items of all types. And you ask yourself, how on earth could this be part of what is in the marine environment of the country? They deteriorate over time. But the point is, Mr. Speaker, sir, you find a number of items which clearly should not be there. And it tells us that we are dealing with a society - because some of these things obviously are dumped at sea - and it tells us we are dealing with a society that is either very uncaring or in some instances ignorant of the damage that they are causing.

But sir, beyond that human contribution which is done knowingly and unwittingly and intentionally, there is also, sir, the danger that we face on the west coast of contaminants in the water because of the fact that we are not yet in a position to have a west coast sewage project up and running. Now this is a very serious issue that has to be addressed with a measure of urgency by this government. The West Coast is the tourism capital of Barbados. It is

where the pristine and prestigious high-cost and high-class hotels are located. It is on the west coast that you find hotel rooms going at - well, as high as \$30 000 a night. That is a fact. Sometimes in peak season you can get that high. That is a lot of money. But when people, sir, are then bathing in the water off the west coast - and I am not saying this, sir, to cause any undue alarm because I know that it is not at a stage that is going to cause immediate difficulty or immediate crisis to any individual bathing - but we have been able to identify, and I think the Minister is aware, that there has been identified certain types of matter in the water off the west coast of Barbados that really and truly, were they there in a greater degree of density, would represent a serious problem for this country. It certainly is representing a serious problem for the survivability of the reef off the coast of Barbados on the western side of the island. It is killing the reefs, Mr. Speaker, the contaminant in the water.

If we lose those reefs, we lose the inherent natural protection that in times of climatic disaster - for example, hurricane and so on, when the tides are very high - you do not have the reef acting as a barrier. And then, sir, the reality is that the low-lying west coast is even more endangered. Right now, off Hometown, for example, I think that the water table may be two or three feet deep. We are lying very low. And the fact is, sir, that when once you have nothing to break the flow of water onto the land, then we imperil not only the real estate, but the human beings in the real estate, the commerce that is taking place on that part of the island. And as I said, sir, there is a lot of the good in Barbados and the substance of the Barbados economy - not to mention the good folk of St. James and those who come to visit in St. James and recreate in St. James - who will all be exposed to this. So this is a serious problem.

And, sir, I think that part of the contribution of the Member for St. Michael South East was that she wanted to see more intersectoral relationships in this regard, sir. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Water Resources must find common interests with the National Conservation Commission on this question, sir, of the West Coast. The urgent need for us to accelerate the implementation process of the west coast sewage project. And more importantly than that, Mr. Speaker, sir, such steps that must be taken to protect the reef. And let me also say this. If the reefs die, then they have to be artificially replaced. And that is a multimillion dollar exercise which we should do well to avoid.

The other fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that in the area of Bay Street - I do not know if the Minister touched on this matter extensively, but as I just indicated, off Bay Street in Barbados, there is what, to all intents and purposes, has been a demarcated, even if not legislatively protected, zone for marine protection and marine

development and so on. It possesses some of the most beautiful fish that you would have ever seen, sir. A member could kneel on the ocean floor immediately opposite the office of the Prime Minister. And if he crumbled a piece of bread, he would be completely surrounded by fish of every colour imaginable with a density such, sir, that you would not see the member but for the fish. That is a fact. They do that with the visitors. And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, sir, that the concern that we must have is that it is an area now which is becoming intensely trafficked by water sports operators of all types - the speedboats, the pleasure vessels, the jet ski operators, and so on. And Mr. Speaker, with all of those activities taking place there, there has to be some regulation. There has to be some way in which we make sure that we are not damaging the natural environment. I believe it is correct to say that this is a matter that is drawing the attention of the National Conservation Commission. But it is a matter, sir, which I urge needs to be given the weight and force of legislative regulation and brought to this Parliament so that we can ensure that which really and truly is one of the most exciting attractions being offered to not only cruise tourism, but land-based tourists as well, is not compromised.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that the other issue for me is that question of how we deal with and maintain the parks and open spaces in Barbados. In many, many developments, people are creating their own or maintaining as best they can the area which they have in common. Where such areas do exist as a recreational park, there have been competitions where people are encouraged to develop a park, beautify the park, and they get some sort of award and prize and so on and so forth. Mr. Speaker, I know that it is particularly difficult for government to carry the burden of maintaining every such park that is created in Barbados. But this is one of the areas where I feel that there is a wonderful opportunity for us to expand on the excellent idea of having the private sector doing some of the work, then being compensated for it down the road.

In this instance, however, sir, I would want to say that this should not be as it is on the highway where you have the largest businesses in Barbados adopting a kilometre. But I think the time has come, sir, where we have now to go into the belly of the community and let us put together the young people in the community and imbue them with a sense of social consciousness and say to them that this is part of the ownership, the patrimony of the land. And I think, sir - I know in my constituency right now there is a willingness to do this type of thing. Guys would be willing to come together and to maintain certain areas, and they take a sense of pride in maintaining the area or in the idea of maintaining the area where they live. We kind of beat up on the young people in this country. I think what they want is an opportunity to play a part, too. And while I am not in any way knocking or rejecting what I see happening across the highway, because I know that has

been a good thing and I share the view that it should continue - the adopt-a-kilometre or whatever project you call it - but I think, sir, that we must now give equal opportunity to the small man, so called, and more particularly to the young people who want to lend creative talent and creative juices to making their community something special in their eyes and give them that sense of ownership in the process.

And, Mr. Speaker, sir, for them to be given that opportunity in exchange, sir, for them organising themselves into a structured group - so you could identify what that group is called - and then that group be given the necessary reward financially, I think, Mr. Speaker, will go a long way to helping us breathe new life and new enthusiasm into this concept we have of a Barbados which is owned by all Barbadians and in which all Barbadians can participate in a meaningful way. Very often I have seen in my constituency, sir, guys come together in order to do something of that nature. But obviously it is a one-off thing. For example, a couple of years ago we went into Fitz Village on a matter which, sir, I have spoken to the Minister of Culture about. And there is a hard court down there, a lot of bush in the area. And these fellows decided we will clean this up. And you hire the necessary equipment where heavy equipment was necessary. And sir, the fellows worked all day long and so on and so forth. And the ladies helped with a little lunch and lemonade and so on. But sir, that is a one-off thing. And out of conscience you realise that it is not sustainable because five, six months later you are back to where you were at the start of the year.

But the reality is that an effort was made. And I think so that we have now to buy into that, tap into that goodwill that exists and make sure that folks who are willing to make the effort to put in the sweat equity in making their environment that much better, their neighbourhood more pleasing to live in and to recreate themselves in, that they then be given some measure of reward and compensation for it in a structured way so that it can be something that is continuing and ongoing and not just a flash in the pan, a spasmodic effort. If we are able to do that across Barbados, Mr. Speaker, sir, I think that we go a long way towards having the buy-in across Barbados. Because everybody understands that it is not each and every community that is going to be able to do what some of the folks on the highway are doing for a kilometre. But we also understand, sir, that the area where we live and the surroundings that we live in every day should be maintained in a certain way. And if the resources, in terms of the human resources, do not exist in government to do it, then sir, government can find more creative ways of having those human resources put at its disposal and a little recompense being offered in return. And I think, Mr. Speaker, sir, that will help along -

with the. To enhance the other positive developments of a transformative nature which have been articulated by the Honourable Minister. I think.

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time has expired. I'll give you two minutes to end.

And in the two minutes you say is left me, sir, I say this only that I think the National Conservation Commission is a most wonderful department of government because it offers services that this country desperately needs to maintain. We are a tourism destination and we are a destination, sir, that people come to and want to see as much of it as possible. If, Mr. Speaker, sir, I can arrive in Malaysia, as I have done, and leave the airport and see not a concrete median in the middle of the road, but, sir, hedges, shrubbery, all the way down to the hotel I stayed at, not only on the hard shoulder on either side, but you take out that concrete and you put in the hedges all the way down the road. And we could do a similar thing here. We can make Barbados so much greener and so much more exciting and attractive in terms of ambiance. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that a lot more thought and creativity has to continue to go into it. But I end by saying, as I began, that I believe the Minister is demonstrating that he has taken tentative steps along the right track. I'm obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, sir.

Member for Christ Church West Central.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to enter this debate in support of this Bill before the House which seeks to validate the number of the charges made by the fees charged and collected by the National Conservation Commission in relation to the use of its facilities over a period of time, I believe from 1990 up until the present moment. And I would like to begin by crediting the Minister and his ministry for coming to the House within a relatively short space of time to correct an anomaly in the system. I'm always honest - to correct this anomaly and to ensure that the Parliament is given the opportunity to rectify a matter and to make legal what obviously was not done legally before. And I think that speaks to the kind of governance that this government has always been known for in relation to ensuring that matters are dealt with in a transparent manner.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, the debate has pitched to a level which I think is important within the context of affording us the opportunity to have a glance at the general role and function of the National Conservation Commission. And I must confess that I like the tone of the last speaker, the Member for St. James Central, because his contribution has been rooted in sense and sensibility, which to my mind has to be the tenor of a debate of this kind. In much of what he had to say, I believe runs in tandem with what I heard the honoured Minister say in his introductory

remarks. And it argues well, Mr. Speaker, in relation to where we should stand as a Parliament in relation to matters that ought not to divide us. And I would like to say that I certainly endorse his position in relation to how we approach the question of derelict premises which continues to be a challenge across our communities. And of course, varying efforts, including efforts made by the National Conservation Commission, the Ministry of Transport and Works, and of course, the Ministry of Health, they have actually proceeded along particular paths to deal with this issue - an age-long process. And of course, I believe we are very mindful of the challenge and we are dedicated to finding solutions in relation to that, including some of what the Honourable Member for St. James Central would have mentioned.

I also certainly agree with him that there has to be ways found to integrate within our system in relation to conservation, integrate our young people. Much of that is happening at the moment in our varying communities. And I believe that there are projects which have been identified to sensitise our communities in relation to conservation. And I would have observed certainly over the last couple of years that many of our community groups have been visibly involved in many cleanup campaigns, whether in relation to the sargassum seaweed or in relation to other areas of our community. Indeed, I would have had a cleanup campaign in the Silver Hill area in which a number of young people from the community were involved. And this, I believe, Mr. Speaker, must be part of the partnership which we have to engage in relation to the role of the state, in this case, of course, the role of the National Conservation Commission, which is charged under Chapter 393 of the laws of Barbados, with a number of very important roles within the context of preserving and conserving our communities.

I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that the role of conservation, preservation, maintaining our communities, the cleanliness of our communities must also be one in which we encourage leadership at the community level. And I am agreeing with the Honourable Member for St. James Central that leadership ought not to be tainted with a political brush, but it has to be as apolitical as possible - as non-partisan as possible. I believe there are opportunities where the political parties across Barbados sometimes have to forget the partisanship and join in community activities, whether it be the bushing, whether it be football matches, and come together in the interests of our communities. I believe it ought not to be the case that any of us are punished for taking that kind of noble stand. And it ought to be encouraged. I would like to see more community groups, including political operatives, MPs, championing the cause of being involved in community activities, whether they be limited to the bushing, conservation strategies or wider activities. And I welcome the tone of the Member for St. James because he is signalling, as I do, that

in relation to a number of broad categories in Barbados, including conservation efforts, that we have to put our heads together and we have to send a signal that is rooted in a commonality to preserve our various ecosystems.

I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that one of the key roles of the National Conservation Commission - I think, certainly, as far as I'm aware, the NCC has been doing a creditable job across Barbados. And I believe we really would have to congratulate the workers of the National Conservation Commission for being very consistent and producing, by and large, a high quality of service. However, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I believe we also have to raise the consciousness of our people to the point that the preservation of our environments, ensuring that our environment is kept clean, cannot only be seen to be the role of the National Conservation Commission or indeed the SSA. But it has to be a shared responsibility where all of us take the very high road of ensuring that we keep our communities as clean as possible.

I have observed, Mr. Speaker, that there has been the continuous act of littering, particularly on our highways. And I know that we are looking at legislation to bring certainly under control the wanton littering of our highways, certainly our places of recreation. But I think as a country, we should not only respond to the need to make sure that we do not litter only by means of legislative sanction. And I would like to use this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to appeal particularly to our drivers, persons who would be seen from time to time, particularly with young children in their cars, throwing various types of litter on our highways and our byways of Barbados. And I believe that these are issues that we have to speak to in a common voice, because our highways, though they are cleaned, of course, by either the Sanitation Service Authority, MTW or the NCC, certainly represent for us and to our visitors an indication of whom we are as a people. And we have to be able to continue to project that image of cleanliness across our communities.

I believe, too, Mr. Speaker, that the issue was raised in the debate so far in relation to finding flexible ways to encourage entrepreneurship. And I know one of the key roles of the National Conservation Commission has to do with the licensing of vendors who ply their trade on our beaches in particular. And I do agree that the approaches to vending on our beaches, not only our beaches, but certainly all across Barbados, has changed over the years because we have made no secret, Mr. Speaker, that part of our growth strategy, part of our strategy of encouraging employment and encouraging innovation, is the whole question of entrepreneurship. In fact, within the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, we have the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, which is a leader in the area of encouraging and supporting our young entrepreneurs. In fact, many of them who either go into the area of vending have created some

very sophisticated mechanisms by which they transact their businesses. Some of that is transacted on our beaches and indeed on our highways and byways. And I think the area of the issue of flexibility in relation to licensing is something that we recognise we will have to pay attention to because that is an important area of economic activity. It is an area of economic activity, Mr. Speaker, that is recognised not only by members of the public, but certainly as a government, we recognise that. And certainly we are very keen on ensuring that as wide a gamut of opportunity is provided for our people, including our young people, so that they can ply their trade and they can be involved in the economic activity of Barbados.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that part of our mission, part of our role as lawmakers, certainly to ensure that when it comes to agencies such as the National Conservation Commission and the role that they have to play. I did hear the contribution which spoke of the need to move with alacrity to ensure that the west coast sewage project is brought to fruition, for example. And of course, the point was being made that in the absence of such a facility, there is inherent danger to our coastlines, to our reefs, and ultimately to our economic well-being. Because, of course, there is the potential harm that can be caused to our main foreign exchange earner, which is tourism. But of course, there is a wider issue here which speaks to untold damage to our ecosystems, our environment, that of course, we would not want to fathom at all.

But I think the Parliament has to understand that these projects, which are very necessary, are also extremely expensive. In fact, these projects require proper pre-planning so that the necessary financial resources can be obtained. And while it is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to introduce anything of a partisan nature to this debate, I think one of the things we should be very mindful of in our strategy and policies, particularly in relation to when our economies are booming and our growth rates are high, that we have to make sure that the growth that we have is ploughed into developmental projects of this kind, and that we do not therefore have what we call a bunching of critical projects that are all required and are necessary. But if only some of these projects would have been started when the money was available in all of its abundance and splendour, then I would take seriously some of the very erudite submissions. And I'm being very constructive here, Mr. Speaker. I'm not being in any way facetious. I'm being constructive. Now, why not let us raise the bar of our discourse to recognising that there are wider economic planning issues involved in the wish list of critical projects that we would want to enunciate in this chamber - one of course being the West Coast Sewage Project. Indeed, the government is very hard at work in ensuring that project becomes a reality and we are doing it within an environment where the country is facing tough economic times. My position on that is that it ought not to have been

the case in relation to such a vital project. And therefore there has to be a balance brought to the table in relation to boasting of economic growth, on average 3.54 per cent, that we would have heard existed prior to 2008, and not translating that growth into the construction of meaningful development projects such as the West Coast Sewage Project. So I'm agreeing with the Honourable Member for St. James Central, but I'm also urging him to climb the ladder even further and to agree with me that as we connect with the need to plan out these projects that are critical to our own well-being, our economic existence, that governments have got to be prudent in relation to their economic strategies and that prudence has got to be the mandate that we take forward in relation to ensuring that these projects can become a reality.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are other issues, of course, which the National Conservation Commission has involved itself in that I believe has been very purposeful in the growth and development of our communities. And one of those areas, Mr. Speaker, is the whole question of the development of play parks across our various communities. I want to give the NCC kudos for the work that it has done across Barbados in developing play parks and green spaces. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because the development of play parks alone has had an incredible impact on our communities across Barbados. I have had, Mr. Speaker, the benefit of having at least two community play parks developed in my constituency - one in Gall Hill opposite the Aberdeen Jones Centre, and the other one in Vauxhall within the Vauxhall community. And of course there is another one planned for seniors over in Churchill. But I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the development of those play parks has had a tremendous impact on the life of the communities in which they were developed. And in fact, that particular decision to develop those play parks in the areas that they are located has had the impact of bringing our communities together. We see in those play parks, particularly the one in Gall Hill, the interaction of the seniors with our young people. There is a safety zone now for our children to play without having to fear oncoming traffic. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the effort of creating greenery and also the opportunity to recreate are fundamental pillars upon which the NCC has functioned. And I would like to record certainly my appreciation for the work they have done on the play park in Gall Hill and of course in Vauxhall. I think these efforts need to be commended because they are critical, they are important in relation to the whole environmental strategy of linking our environmental development with the lives of our communities.

The other point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, is the whole question of maintaining our parks and how do we ensure that our parks are public spaces which by law fall under the rubric of the National Conservation Commission. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, that

one of the things we have got to do is to encourage community participation in the maintenance of our parks and public places. And indeed, it is a similar strategy that we are looking to follow in the National Sports Council. We recognise that there are a number of playing facilities, we have pavilions all across Barbados. And one of the policy strategies we will be intending to adopt is to work with community organisations and community groups in the maintenance of those facilities. But we are establishing the policy framework upon which that would happen. I must say one of the first groups that would have echoed a willingness to work with the National Sports Council on this has been the group in the constituency of the Member for Christ Church East, the Minister of the Environment. And I wish to assure him that we are working feverishly on that policy framework to allow not only for the community group, I believe in the Silver Sands area and others, but other community groups that wish to work with the National Sports Council in the maintenance of facilities will be guided by an appropriate policy framework that will allow for what I believe has got to be the kind of government-community partnership that is critical to maintaining facilities under a shared responsibility.

Because, Mr. Speaker, by and large, whether we are talking about the NCC facilities or the facilities managed by the National Sports Council, these facilities have been developed with the taxpayers' dollars of Barbadians, but they are by and large facilities developed for the community, developed for the people of the various areas in which they are developed. And it must be - it must be a crying shame, Mr. Speaker - when facilities are developed and they are vandalised, they are not cared for, persons use them in a manner that they will not use their own personal property. And while we cry shame on that, I am of the view that we have to get to a level of encouraging a shared sense of responsibility in relation to the maintenance and the care of these facilities.

So following that vision, Mr. Speaker, then in proceeding to ensure that Barbados achieves the goal, as we heard from the Minister, of becoming the most revered green economy in this part of the Western hemisphere within a certain time frame - to move along that path, Mr. Speaker, requires a new sense of awakening, a new visioning, a new sense of shared public, private sector and community responsibility as it relates to the care of our facilities. And it can be achieved if we echo, as we are doing in this debate, a non-partisan approach to the care and maintenance of these public spaces. And I therefore say, Mr. Speaker, that in congratulating the National Conservation Commission for what it has been doing, I believe we have got to move quickly to the next stage upon which we will build out this green economy through a shared responsibility, a shared vision, where we have a new awakening of responsibility within our communities - by our parents, by our young people, by our adults, our

community workers, our schools. That the whole question of defacing property, throwing litter onto our highways and dumping - because illegal dumping has been something that we have highlighted from time to time - using vacant lots for throwing your old bed, and if you do not want your fridge anymore, in the darkness of the night you go into a particular cart road and decide you are going to discard it, without having any thought about the inherent damage that will be doing to the environment as well as the additional hard work that of course the state agencies will have to engage in to move it.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that as we talk about the role of the NCC, that this is a great opportunity to raise a level of consciousness in the minds of Barbadians, young and old, that this act of caring, sharing, conserving and preserving our facilities, our monuments, our historic structures - because under the National Conservation Act, the NCC also has a responsibility for the preservation of monuments and historic edifices - and therefore we have a responsibility to ensure that we preserve and conserve. And in doing that, Mr. Speaker, I believe we will be not only promoting the rudiments and the principles upon which our democracy has been enshrined in our constitution, but as we move into the celebration of our 50th anniversary of independence, we would clearly demonstrate to the world that we have come of age in relation to all facets of our economic and socio-cultural reality and that we have truly taken responsibility for our destiny. On this occasion, Mr. Speaker, our destiny which relates to the preservation and the conservation of our environment. I'm obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to support the call made by most of the honourable members today for measures to be put in place in relation to littering and illegal dumping. I know that we boast of this large amount of education, free education that we have received over the decades. But it seems to me as though we have developed a culture of people who seem to be interested in self and self alone. They forget that they are members of a community and that they should work together to keep it clean. Most people try. But the small percentage that continues to litter and to dump illegally has cast a sad position on the lives of Barbadians. It is a very embarrassing and disgraceful act that all of us in here see every day. And I want to encourage Barbadians to change that culture of looking after self. This I-like-myself attitude and work together as communities, as most of us have always seen our country develop. And I am terribly disappointed, Mr. Speaker, at what is happening to destroy the whole character of Barbados that we know. A lush green Barbados where visitors who come among us praise us in the past for the way we kept our country and our communities. I think it is really a very retrograde step that

we have made, some of us have made, in destroying our dear beloved country. I believe that the laws need to be enforced because they know there are laws on the statute books. But nowadays we have

seen a culture of people who do not want to say the number of the truck that would have passed in and dropped off the side mattress, as was mentioned by the other honourable member, or the dead animals or whatever would have been intended for the landfill that would have been dropped in neighbourhoods. And I think it is so unfortunate. I have done it many times, having seen trucks and other vehicles dispose of their garbage along the street and in communities. I do not know what the follow up will have been. And I know that our police officers are stretched and when you have to call them, perhaps it is not something they could attend to as readily as if it were injury to human beings. But I think that these breaches are getting worse by the minute. And I believe that the whole municipal tax that was instituted over a year ago has helped to add to persons dumping illegally, and that tipping fee. And I am most distressed, Mr. Speaker, when I go through certain communities in the parish where I live to see how many persons have made it a dumping ground. And there are pictures to show what is being dumped in the communities, sometimes just two minutes away from the mangrove landfill. And the truckers are saying, why must we pay \$40 to go through to dispose of this when we have only got \$50 from the persons who have asked us to dump? So when you see the carcasses of animals, tyres that are hard to be destroyed, whatever is left from industrial construction, from construction materials and so on, it hurts my heart. And it is not only St. Thomas, but if you go through sections of St. Joseph, Christ Church as well, sections of St. Michael, that person seemed to think that the communities are lonesome. They just dispose of it in the darkness of the night. And I think that is an area where community folk must come together and look out for these people and report whatever they have seen to the authorities with an effort to grab a few. And I believe when you grab a few, others will stop.

I had the unfortunate experience within recent times, sir, since this tipping fee had been put in place, to visit communities like Vacluse, Bucks, Dukes, Dunstfield and so on, and to see large amounts of garbage. But what I can say is, from agitating, I am extremely grateful to the agencies, the Sanitation Services Authority as well as the Environmental Protection Department at Warrens, because over a two-month period they were able to move in a new grumping box and to be able to remove some of that garbage. I know over time, if those truckers and others who do it see that it has been cleaned up and there is no watchdog, perhaps they will go back. But I trust that they will change their way and not go into anybody's neighbourhood at all, but make sure that they do the right thing.

I do not understand why Barbadians think that they should give a blind eye and a deaf ear to what is good, what is important, what is proper, what is for good living, and then impact on the lives of others who are innocent and cannot even help themselves. I support every effort, sir, for the enhancement of green areas, especially in rural Barbados. Because I know that in the past rural Barbados was like the outside child. And so you heard a lot about Christ Church and a lot about St. Thomas and those areas where the tourism component would have kicked in. And I know that over the past, perhaps 15 to 20 years, rural Barbados has seen an injection of funds and assistance to help to enhance the environment. And I think that is really very critical.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the dismantling of Beautify Barbados has even made it worse. Now let me say perhaps. I know it has made the situation worse because Beautify Barbados did excellent work across the length and breadth of Barbados and everybody was reliant on them to be able to keep the neighbourhoods and the highways clean. Now that those persons have been sent home, St. Thomas, St. Joseph, St. Andrew, those communities are tacky. The environs are really, really in a bad state and do require some assistance to be able to help to keep the highways and the parks and other places of interest in a tidy fashion. Similarly with NCC and many of those people who have been sent home. It is unfortunate that it happened. I have been told that it is the economic situation that has led to that. But we are suffering as a result of the loss of the employment of those many workers who are now on the bread line and suffering as well.

On visits to our sister islands we can all speak to the ways most of them are kept. And within the past couple of months in my travel, I have seen some islands or some countries that perhaps we would have called lesser developed and so, where their streets are very clean. And I think it is a combination of the agencies, the communities working together, but more particularly all of the residents in those communities in those countries coming together with a consciousness that this country belongs to us and anything we do with our illegal disposal of our waste will impact on us and our water systems and our health. And therefore I am seeing a lot of that. And I feel jealous about it because Barbados was never so nasty ever before that I can recall. Since we have had these challenges and these unscrupulous persons who seem to think that they can do as they like when they like without anybody putting them in court, letting them go through the court system to pay for their wrongdoings.

I support what the honourable Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs and so would have said earlier about how communities combine together, work together to make a difference. And the generational links are critical to pass on our history and our culture to our young people. It gives

our young people opportunities, young and old, opportunities to get rid of some of the pent-up energies. When you are confused, when you are tired, when you lose your job, when you have problems in your families and you can go to the park or you can go to a place of recreation and relax or do a little exercise, it really does help to ease that tension. Communication takes place, people talking with each other. Because we have grown to - we have become accustomed now to some very haughty, pompous people among us who came through the same circumstances as most of us, but they do not even want to speak. They put up their gates, they are removed from the community. Many others, however, are willing and volunteering to be a part of the development of their community, so that at the end of the day, everybody is a winner. And I think that we have grown away from a lot of what we did as a result of the upward social mobility. But we need to step back, because when we see what is happening in communities that are unkempt - today is my day, tomorrow is somebody else's - with the burglars who are going to break into our houses because of all the bushes hanging around us. And it is so unfortunate.

I know the legislation is there as well, where many people have got land, some of them are living overseas. Bought the land 20 years ago, 25 years ago, never looked back, started houses, left the structure there, never looked back to do anything. And I know that the Ministry of Health and the Sanitation Authority, as well as the National Conservation Commission, have got legislation for those persons to make sure that they clean up the facilities or, if they do not clean them, and the Sanitation Services Authority and the other agencies have to do the cleaning, the funds are added to the tax bill for them to be able to pay it. And I think it is very important. We are very uncomfortable as to the way many of our neighbours have left the environments that they own or that they have bought. And it creates tremendous danger for us.

Many people still do not have their own vehicles. They have to walk when they get off the bus. My transportation system in St. Thomas is in turmoil with that Sturgis bus that had been taken off the route - perhaps only four buses on the routes per day. We were accustomed to 12. And those lonesome roads that people have to travel with all the overgrowth, it really is having a deleterious impact on them and their lives, especially at night. So I am saying we really require some assistance.

I hope that we will be able to get our play areas back up and running. I know that the community spirit used to be very vibrant, and I can speak with a measure of authority when it comes to the Cane Garden Park. Not the community now called Cane Garden Park, but the park right in the heart of Platinum Avenue, where the residents started the Neighbourhood Watch. It was a flourishing one. They had bought their own motor and they would cut the

lawns. But with the heavy rainfall, Mr. Speaker, in the parish, and sometimes for three consecutive weeks, the residents no longer have the equipment. The harsh economic situation has impacted on them in their pockets. And therefore, even when they are pooling to get the place cleaned up, it is not happening. So the park in Platinum Avenue in Cane Garden has not been cut by NCC since October 2013. So you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, the vines in the palm trees and the fear of the residents in there who can only manicure four feet away from them, but can go no further because they do not have the equipment. And to the credit of the NCC staff, as well as that of MTW, who were trying over the last two months to get it cleaned up, unfortunately there is equipment but the swipe is not working or they cannot get a truck to even start to cut some of it to create a safer space for people to be able to play, to recreate. Even weddings could have been held there, Mr. Speaker, for the way that place used to be kept. Unfortunately, we cannot get any help because we are being told the government agencies have no funding. If then the Government wishes to, perhaps on a weekend basis, lend the community a lawnmower or some other piece of equipment, that will help, because to go to those agencies from which you have to rent, that is another dent in the pocket. And our middle class has been hit very hard with this economic situation as well.

But I want to say that the parks not being clean detracts. It does not only detract, but it causes persons not to be able to meet and to cheer on and to give courage and to talk with and to change the whole culture of what is happening in the village. Instead, we are seeing rats and centipedes and mosquitoes and burglars. Five houses in Cane Garden were broken into in one day within recent times. And I am talking the Platinum Sunflower area because of the bush that the guys can hide in. And I am saying guys now because we have some women now who are so unscrupulous, they seem to think that going the route of crime pays for them. And they think that going to prison is a badge of honour. And therefore they are joining up and doing all kinds of unfortunate things that are impacting on the lives of those persons who live and suffer at the hands of those persons who do not care about anything about themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to make mention - and I am glad for the honourable minister to hear this because I have written officially - but I would like some help in this respect because there is also a park at Edge Hill Heights Phase 2 where a resident now going on past 80 is suffering as a result of a tree that was planted by the agencies. And the tree has been planted so near to the family house, it has already cracked a lot of the guard wall and is heading to undermine the stability of the house. Yes, NCC staff has come and examined it, but that tree continues to spread out like a chestnut tree and it is impacting and undermining the facility. It is an old man, he is not very well. And of course

calling and complaining does not help. But I would really like some kind of assistance for that tree to be cut so that those roots will stop spreading. Because to undermine that property, it really spreads. If he has to go to court, a tremendous amount of money Government will have to pay as a result. And I do not think that it needs to go that far. Some help should be given as soon as possible to be able to make sure that the growth of that tree is managed and that the residents can sleep in a more comfortable way in the homes that they have worked so hard to build.

I also want, Mr. Speaker, to refer to what I understood would have been a policy - whether it was in full writing I cannot recall now - but I knew that those builders who built, who were in the time of 1994 to 2008, once they built 25 houses or more, there was an agreement for spaces to be made available for recreation. And I think it is so unfortunate - and I am not going to call the name of the community now - but there was a recreational space and the residents started to move in and then that recreational space found a house placed on it. So those 30, 35 houses in that area have no space for persons to play as a result of the builder or the contractor putting a house on the spot where the space should be. I can take you, Mr. Speaker, and show you other communities in the parish where I live, where the watercourse is the place - at least there are two of them - where the watercourse is the place where the recreational space has been put. Who is going to go into a place where water will gush down when it rains for little children and others to be washed away? It does not make sense to me, but sometimes when people have a need, they want to get a house, they find it within their pockets or they find that they are able to get the loan, then they go for that property. But then to find out you have nowhere to play and the houses are so close to each other that you do not have the space. And I mean, I cringe when I see what is happening. With 150 houses near District D Police Station, there is little or no space for those persons to recreate. And I hope that builder and those persons in the community will make the approach for somewhere, some space that they can go and play and put down their benches and so on and have a good time.

I also want, Mr. Speaker, to speak to the issue of the Adopt-a-Kilometre project. From the time I heard it, Mr. Speaker, I opposed it strenuously. And I did speak to some of the persons in Beautify Barbados and in the NCC well in advance when it was broached, to let them know, you guys need to watch that because I believe that you will get displaced by it. But you know what hurts me even worse, Mr. Speaker? Now that it has come into being and those persons have been sent home - passing the highway, meaning the stretch, because I often see it in the stretch between Haggatt Hall and Huddersfield turning - with five black men with the weed whackers and the various other instruments that they need for cleaning the highway being supervised by a white man. And I am not talking racism

now, but I am saying that we had reached a stage in Barbados when we said that was done. And I abhor it when I know that innocent people - 10 years, 12 years, 15 years in NCC and Beautify Barbados - worked on those projects and did a fantastic job, better than what I see now. The Adopt-a-Kilometre project is partly responsible for some of those people being sent home. And it is very unfortunate.

But I speak, Mr. Speaker, as well, of when we leave Redman's Village and we go north and we go all the way down to Haymons. And that particular street, sir, that particular highway, it is so much in dire need of maintenance, Mr. Speaker. I cannot speak of it in any other form. That part of the highway, Mr. Speaker, needs a lot of manicuring. It needs a lot of cleaning in order to enhance that environment. That too, I understand. Because when the honourable minister had spoken about it in this honourable chamber, mention was made of the highway going from the airport to the seaport, but also to the northern part of the island. And I think that at this point in time, the northern part of the island is being neglected as a result of what I am seeing on the roads. I am disturbed, Mr. Speaker, and I abhor the sight of what I see there.

I have no problem, Mr. Speaker, with big businesses getting contracts and doing what they have to do. But I have a bigger problem when our people who have worked for many years - some of them would have been given security of tenure as permanent workers and so - have been sent home now to be on the mendicant line, now to be on the bread line, are having to beg. Most politicians are being approached to offer help and we can understand the reason why, because when you are not working, your families need to be looked after. It is unfortunate, sir. And perhaps the honourable minister, since he has gone so far and so extensively in explaining what the NCC and the other agencies have been doing, which I respect very much, may want to give us an update as to what is happening with the tribunal and those persons who are waiting to get their money to be able to feed their families, to build their house, to pay their mortgages, because some of them have lost almost everything that they have had since they have been sent home.

I also want, Mr. Speaker, to query the stalling of the debushing programme for more than five years. That bushing programme was only for a short period. I knew it would have been under the Ministry of Health and perhaps in association with other government agencies, but that bushing programme served well to bring in some money in a seasonal way into the pockets of persons. And if it were \$200 000 or \$500 000 put in the pockets of poor people, it would have circulated, Mr. Speaker, in the economy. But when I can see a crossover for \$2.5 million and hardly anybody crossing on it, to me that money could have been better spent cleaning and beautifying Barbados. I have a tremendous, tremendous difficulty. I have a tremendous

difficulty in understanding why the bushing programme has been scrapped by this Government that came in and found systems in place with projects, policies and programmes. And to their credit, they will get whatever praises would have been due to them. But to scrap most of those has put further hardship on the people who have been displaced and it puts further hardship on families, friends and indeed the politicians. Because at the end of the day, most of us still have to fill those gaps when there is food that is needed, school uniforms, books, medical bills and all the other things that we know persons will call upon us for, especially when they are in dire straits. And I believe that the debushing programme is something that should come back because when we have the heavy seasonal rains, it is really very important that we keep our spaces clean, keep Barbados clean for locals first and then the visitors after. And we will embrace each other as we know we always have over the years.

I know persons will say, well, she lives in St. Thomas, what does she know about turtles nestling? But I heard callers on the radio sometimes in September and early October, asking and pleading for the authorities to cover lights that were near the nesting areas because the persons who I understand would have had a measure of knowledge in respect of it were saying that the nestlings, the baby turtles, were coming onto the highway because the light that was near them was so bright and it was attracting them. And then most of them were killed on the highway and that there are few volunteers. They want to plead with those persons who live in those areas to volunteer to help to save that hawksbill turtle, the breed, and to help to make sure that they are saved from sudden death on the road or by persons who will pick them up and ill-treat them, because some people will take the turtle home and forget to feed them and so on. Others go to kill them, which is really very, very unfortunate. I believe that volunteers to assist are needed.

I am from St. Thomas and again, I have not seen Mr. Speaker there, but we in St. Thomas enjoy a good sea bath. And I agree that our lifeguards play a critical role. And I know and I have witnessed most of them whenever I get a little chance to go to the beach, how professionally they perform their duties. But sadly, many of them have been sent home too. We need for them to be there to assist locals and visitors again. And I am a strong believer that any one life that is saved is important to our advancement as a people. It is foolhardy to send them home in these times when we know children will go to the beach, sometimes they go unattended, their parents do not know, others are on the beach and they are getting into difficulties and so on. And at times the lifeguard may not necessarily be there. We know of an incident in St. Philip and there was a terrible outcry from the residents. And I am not saying that the lifeguard can save them all, but the fact that we know a

lifeguard is there, we would want to be able to enjoy ourselves on the beaches.

I want to thank the Barbados Labour Party as a government for the vision it had in the construction of the boardwalks. And those boardwalks have served us well. It is now this Government's duty to ensure that the boardwalks are enhanced and maintained, to be able to help those residents and visitors among us, to be able to recreate, to be able to go out at night, to be able to do all the things that will make them happy. I think it is a great project and one that should be replicated in other parts of the country so that others can get a chance to be able to enjoy life to the fullest. During our times when things are hard, we feel it. But the boardwalk, the play parks, the other recreational spaces help to make a difference in taking off some of the baggage, taking off some of the stress off our shoulders when we take advantage of them.

I also believe, sir, as I wrap up, that upgrades should be put in place in some of the toilet facilities, washroom facilities at some of those facilities on the beach. I have been to some and they are looking tacky. They need a good scrub down and so on. And yes, we are talking about thousands of people using them on a weekly basis, but the maintenance is important. Some of the toilets there too are out of operation. I know that there are costs associated with it and I know sometimes that the residents, the locals and others do not treat the bathrooms well. They stand on the toilet bowl covers and crack them up. They do all kinds of strange things. But we still have a responsibility to make sure that the facilities are available to everyone. And I would like to see maintenance taking place at some of those areas. Some of the benches, tables, they need repairs; some of the equipment for play and so on; even some of the signage that gives the name of the recreational facility - those too need to be upgraded.

And I want to find out if the minister would be so kind as to indicate how successful has that project been - the business element in NCC, where the public can go to purchase seedlings, other plants, pots, other pieces of equipment for their own gardening and so on - and of course the outsourcing of services of the NCC, because we knew when the NCC staff would be able to go and fulfil a contract with another agency, whether private or public sector, and be able to work to bring in funding to help to improve the amounts that would have been given in to the NCC.

And I close, Mr. Speaker, by indicating that I am extremely grateful to those agencies - the NCC, the SSA, MTW, the Ministry of Health, in particular the Environmental Protection Department - and so for coming together when they are called upon, despite the fact that it may take a longer period. They still come together and in their limited means give assistance in communities across

the length and breadth of Barbados. And I think that they have done outstanding jobs in this respect. And I wish to publicly express my gratitude to them, as I know all colleagues in here will, because at the end of the day, they have done a good job in keeping Barbados clean and keeping a heritage that they know is all that they have. And I wish to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the moment.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I am grateful to you, sir, for the opportunity to join this discussion this evening and indeed to start by commending the Honourable Minister, the Member for Christ Church East, for a wide-ranging and very informative presentation in introducing this amendment. And indeed because of the range which the Honourable Minister gave in his introduction, members even on that side, sir, on the other side, have been encouraged to see the wisdom of, on this occasion, wholeheartedly supporting the efforts of the National Conservation Commission in its work.

Let us, of course, not, Mr. Speaker, lose sight of the purpose of this Bill and that is to validate the fees charged by the National Conservation Commission ever since the coming into being of those fees in May 1990 and coming forward to now. So it is actually a piece of legislation

seeking to tidy up that aspect of the work of the National Conservation Commission and I believe, indeed, to be able to enforce in a more meaningful way those fees which are sometimes charged for some of the activities. And the Minister was careful to point out that it is not everything that the National Conservation Commission does or every facility that it provides that the people of Barbados, or indeed visitors, are charged for. But there are certain fees charged for the special occasions when activities may be carried out at these properties - which he also named - by private concessioners, of course, or indeed by organs of the Government of Barbados itself.

Mr. Speaker, I quietly listened to the contributions of the member who just sat, and the member made the very important point of the fact that, you know, almost all of Barbados are aware of the immense value of our beaches. And although we may go through moods and swings as to how often, how frequently we may attend our beaches, I think that it is a part of Barbados heritage which we must never lose sight of.

Of course, I represent, sir, a constituency which can be seen as an almost entirely beach constituency, if you look at it that way, starting at the corner of Silver Sands and extending right down to Worthing and including famous areas like Oistins and Dover and of course the

newly created Welches beach, which really has become part of the Oistins ocean offering, because it is indeed an extension of the stretch of beach which starts after the Oistins market. And, sir, it is because I am acutely aware of the kind of activities which these beaches offer and the kind of economies - and I say so very deliberately - it is a very important aspect, the kind of economic activity that these facilities offer to people who live and ply their trade in the constituency of Christ Church South, and indeed in the Christ Church constituency as a whole, and indeed our entire island. Because business people do not stay in one place; business people, especially in this kind of business, tend to move around quite a bit.

We have a unique offering at Oistins, again, which the National Conservation Commission is largely responsible for, and that is the Oistins Bay Garden. And collectively, both administrations have been responsible for putting in place a facility which now offers a level of excellence in service unmatched in the Caribbean, I believe, and indeed a feature of almost every visitor's programme to Barbados. And that is the offering of the Oistins Bay Garden, especially on a Friday and Saturday night. But I would not for one moment want to promote Oistins Bay Garden as a Friday and Saturday night only activity. Any evening of the week, or any daytime of the week, you can journey to Oistins, have lunch, you can relax, you can have a game of dominoes, you can have a beverage or two of your liking. And then indeed, as I indicated, you could even venture to enjoy the beaches.

But the point, I think, which we need to dwell on - and the Honourable Member who just sat made that point - is the question of maintenance of these facilities, and maintenance not only to the extent of taking care of what we have there or what we have in place at the moment, but recognising that even as we continue to offer the facility at Oistins, improvements will have to be made. And there are important improvements at Oistins which we are waiting on, and which are extremely urgent in respect to the drainage. And I know that the National Conservation Commission, along with the Barbados Tourism Investment Corporation and the Ministry of Tourism, are working very hard to come up with a funding arrangement which can see us deal with the question of that flooding area. Ever since it was designed, it is clear that those who designed the project did not bear in mind the fact that there would be occasions, especially in heavy rain, when the stalls near the beachside would actually become inaccessible and therefore render the area very challenging and very difficult, both for the vendors and for those who seek to enjoy the facilities. The truth is that on rainy days it is not as much fun. On rainy evenings it is not as much fun. And people will obviously make decisions, depending on the weather, as to the utilisation of the facility.

But let me not lose track of the point that I want to make about the improvements. The Honourable Member made the point about bathroom facilities, et cetera. And indeed I want to join with her in making special mention of the Oistins facility in this regard. Expansion of the bathroom facilities is an urgent need if we are to maintain the high standards which we have become accustomed to there. Similarly, at Dover, the same situation applies. I know that even as we speak, the National Conservation Commission is in the middle of some new development work at the Dover beach facility. And once that is completed, I know that the facility at Dover will be able to offer an even wider range of services to the public.

The Minister may have alluded - I do not want to put words in his mouth - but he may have alluded to the fact that an important aspect of the work of the National Conservation Commission, one of the ways that it will be able to maintain its efforts, will be in the collection of fees and charges which are made against those who ply their trade in these facilities. And I cannot for one moment condone a situation where persons owe substantial amounts to the National Conservation Commission, or anyone for that matter, and do not seek to liquidate those debts. And I certainly try my best to work with any vendors or any business people in that area working with the National Conservation Commission in an effort to bring about some solution to that situation.

It is true that we can probably conclude that a lot of them make a lot of money. But I want to say, from where I stand today, sir, that we must not draw these conclusions too readily. You know, these businesses suffer from what you call highs and extreme lows. There are periods when there is a lot of vending going on and you benefit from the business that is available. But there are also long periods, sir, where you put your goods out there and there are no takers. So we need to balance these realities as we come to judgement for these businesses. At the same time, we cannot in any way condone negligence or neglect of the responsibility to pay the fees. To my mind, the fees have been worked out to be not exorbitant, but at the same time, yes, they can present challenges. But I encourage the vendors to continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with the National Conservation Commission with a view to ensuring that they can come to satisfactory arrangements about their debt. If there is debt, we must not wait till we reach the stage of no return, where we reach an impasse, so to speak, and then try to make wrong things right. We need to work like business people and I know the National Conservation Commission is prepared to engage in that dialogue.

There has also been the question of the maintenance of the facilities - who does that maintenance? And very recently I have been engaged in some discussion with some of the vendors who have indicated to me, and I have shared

this with the Minister of the Environment and I have shared it with the Minister of Tourism, that they are willing to come together as a group and to assist in the question of maintaining some of these facilities by way of application of a coat of paint, by way of repairs to bathrooms. The Honourable Member made mention of that reality during her presentation. And I think that if that kind of arrangement can be negotiated, if that kind of partnership can be negotiated, well, then it is worth pursuing. I cannot impose any solution in that regard, but I certainly would want to say from here that it is a solution which I think would have my blessing, as Member of Parliament.

Members of Parliament, we get requests from time to time. As a matter of fact, only this morning I had a request from a group of residents who exercise at the Oistins beach to paint the benches at Oistins or to repaint the benches at Oistins. And I have indicated to them that I will engage the General Manager of the National Conservation Commission in discussion to see that come to fruition. I think it is again a good idea, once the colour scheme and the arrangements for painting these facilities can be agreed upon. Obviously you cannot go and paint them any old colour. We have had instances - I think at one time the lane at Dunhill was repainted in some shade of green or gold. Now, if we are going to paint the lane at Dunhill, sir, we are going to have to paint it white. And similarly, if we are going to paint the benches at Oistins or the kiosks at Dover, we have to paint them in colours agreed by the National Conservation Commission and indeed by the historical associations, et cetera, who advise us on these things. After all, we do not come up with these arrangements willy-nilly. Nobody sits in their office as the General Manager of the NCC and decides that the colours at Accra beach will be blue or yellow. You seek some level of participation as to how these colour schemes come about.

And so I want to make the point that there are a number of members of our community who are willing to work with us as a government, as an entity like the National Conservation Commission, with a view to assisting in the programme especially of small maintenance. And these are things from which tremendous advantages can be arrived at if we can come to useful agreements on such a move. As I said before, I repeat, the users of these facilities will be the first to become aware of any defects. And as we all know, if you can repair a defect at the first stages, you can avoid tremendous cost in having to deal with a much larger problem down the road. So I think that we are moving in a direction, and indeed the contributions of the members from the other side this evening should start that dialogue in the community, or should assist us as a government to develop that dialogue in our communities, which will see a lot more of this kind of participatory solution to problems evolve.

Sir, I mentioned the exercise group at Oistins. And there are similar groups at Dover. There are groups at Welches, as I indicated. And they are springing up all over Barbados. The Garrison Savannah, of course, is noted for the large number of workers and those who are retired who come to the Savannah on evenings for exercise between 4.30 at the end of the workday till late into the evening. And again, Brown's beach is famous for a number of Barbadians who frequent that area for much important exercise. And we in the Ministry of Health, of course, recognise this as an important part of our Barbadian expression, an important part of our activities, which must be part of any programme that will see us being able to maintain a healthy Barbados. So we want to, wherever possible, encourage these exercise programmes. We want to help to provide facilities and improve facilities for these programmes. And the truth is the kind of programmes we are talking about on the beaches and on our playing fields do not require a large investment. And therefore we would be only too happy, as the Ministry of Health, to join with these groups, to join with these organisations in promoting that area.

Now, sir, the question of the cleaning of the highway has engaged both sides. And the truth is I am trying to arrive at what is the position of the Opposition with respect to the cleaning of the highway. What are they in favour of? What is the solution they would like to see? Because they are full of praise for the Adopt-a-Kilometre approach on the ABC Highway, and even extending to the Hame on Highway, and at the same time they are tongue-in-cheek and criticising some aspect of it which they are not prepared to elaborate on. You know, we have heard mention by the last speaker of some white supervisor. But the kind of entrepreneurial activity that is taking place in respect to this project is something which is, to my mind, interesting.

I have had, before this assignment as Minister of Health, the honour of serving as Minister of Transport and Works in Barbados. And I have heard and I have witnessed the reality of the inability of the Ministry of Transport and Works to carry out an adequate cleaning job of our sidewalks and our curbs. And on the occasions where they would actually clean it or they would actually dig the grass up, there was never the kind of follow-up or the adequate follow-up in terms of the collection of the material that is created. It is nothing new. It is nothing that started in 2008. It is nothing that started in 2013. Mr. Speaker, this is a reality that the Ministry of Transport has increasingly been unable to clean the sidewalks, et cetera, after they have removed the grass that has been growing in the area. So we have to look at another solution. We have to look at a solution that can work.

So we have got some entrepreneurs in Barbados, some business people who are prepared, in exchange for

advertising space - which by the way is controlled by the Ministry of Transport and Works because they, along with the Town Planning Department, approve any signage on our roadways - so this is advertising that is approved. We have got another classical example of the kind of partnership in the Adopt-a-Stop programme for bus stops. Again, a private sector intervention where business people advertise and we provide shelter, and beautiful bus stops are being created all over Barbados. And it has no cost to the Government of Barbados, but is an expression of entrepreneurial genius, sir, which should be commended rather than criticised.

I believe, sir, the time has come where we need to look at extending the idea of the Adopt-a-Kilometre into some of the villages that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas just spoke about, so as to guarantee that they can be maintained at a standard which the member can tolerate and which us as Members of Parliament and the entire community will be pleased about. And the only price to pay for that kind of approach is that we will probably have to provide some level of advertising space for the business people who pay for the activity. And Mr. Speaker, we need to disabuse our minds of the idea that because that approach is taken, young Barbadians will not have an opportunity to do business or to do work and be paid for it. Because I believe that creates a tremendous opportunity if that project is moved to all of our communities. I can think of areas in my constituency immediately - Goodland and Fairholme, areas of Maxwellin - that need that kind of approach to bring about a level of cleanliness.

Because again, as has been mentioned, more and more Barbadian landowners have not been cleaning their lots. And even if you were to tolerate the bush that is part of the substantive 5 000 or 6 000 square foot property, it is that five metres of reserve and the accompanying curb that suffers the most damage when we have this large and uncontrolled overgrown shrub all over our roadways. And you know, sir, the other reality about this is that same shrubbery, unattended and untrimmed, destroys the road network too. So that whenever we are finished cleaning and clearing, we have an additional cost of repairing the road network and repairing the sidewalks associated with that network. And of course, I need not speak to the questions or the challenges that it presents to drainage, because the roads are designed with certain runoff profiles. Those who are better trained than I am in the business of engineering appreciate what I am talking about. But if you start to grow shrub and collect rubbish at all points of that road network, that natural flow of water to the settlement areas is interrupted and can be diverted to cause flooding. The design, sir, for that arrangement is one which requires that there is a free flow of the rainwater so that there would be little or no flooding.

So I want to suggest to the National Conservation Commission, if it is their duty, or the Ministry of Transport and Works, or indeed to our communities, to let us promote the idea of unleashing upon this problem a new entrepreneurial group who can negotiate with, on the one hand, the agency or ministry responsible, and on the other hand with the business sector, to develop a similar solution for our villages and our heights and our terraces - whatever we term them - as to the one which has been modelled and is proven to be a success on the ABC Highway.

And yes, we need to correct a few points that were made. The Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke to the idea that instead of concrete, we could have shrubs, et cetera, in our roadways. Do not forget that the concrete median on the ABC Highway is not about decoration only. It is not even about separation. It is about safety. So that in the event of accidents, we will reduce the collateral damage to innocent drivers or bystanders. So yes, where it is possible to erect shrubs instead of concrete, we should do so. And the Honourable Minister made a point, and other members who spoke continued to point out the kind of parks and gardens that have been able to evolve in that project.

Another good example of that evolution is in our roundabouts, where again a Ministry of Health solution - and this is nothing that I created; this is something which we came and found and which we have continued to develop - is where again we offer to the business people of Barbados the opportunity to sponsor our roundabouts. And in return for being able to sponsor the roundabouts and to advertise, the business people were able then to clean these roundabouts and maintain them. And this has been an extremely great success in terms of the condition which our roundabouts are in. And it is a part of Barbados. And even now, of course, at this special period of Independence and upcoming Christmas, we have the wonderful sight of the lighted roundabouts, which are part of the attraction of Barbados in the evening.

And sir, again, this is an example of the kind of cooperation which we must encourage as a government, which we must encourage as an opposition when we speak in this Honourable Chamber, sir, and make sure that our people understand what a wonderful world Barbados can become if that cooperation can be maintained.

I want to wind up by just touching a little bit on our coastal and marine areas. And again, this has been thoroughly dealt with by Honourable Members before me. But we have seen the value of the work that has been done by the Ministry of the Environment and indeed the National Conservation Commission. The Minister spoke of the west coast boardwalk, but I want to speak of the Richie Haynes boardwalk, the one on the south coast. And the fact that even now we are working towards extending that

Richie Haynes boardwalk right up to Vauxhall. Now, these are costly projects, but the point is these projects are an investment for the future. These projects are an important investment for the future as we seek to preserve our beaches, as we seek to prevent or reduce erosion of our land or beach lands, and as we seek to protect those many beach properties which are an integral part of our offering as a tourism destination, sir.

In summary, therefore, I want to commend the work of the National Conservation Commission and extend to them the support of this Honourable Member and the community of Christ Church South in coming up with innovative solutions to some of the challenges which we may face from time to time. They are not insurmountable. We have spoken to the solutions which we have already been able to put in place. I believe I have spoken, Mr. Speaker, to a couple of other ideas which, if we extend them and we develop them, can even bring about a better Barbados for all of us. So I want to again congratulate the Honourable Minister, congratulate the entity, the National Conservation Commission, for their work and to encourage the people of Barbados and the people of Christ Church South to join with us as we march to an even better beach environment, an even better coastal environment, and indeed a green environment in Barbados of which we can be truly proud. I am obliged to you, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. You are a member for St. James North. Okay.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I wish to intervene in this debate on validation of fees retroactively or over the last 25 years, in fact, for the National Conservation Commission. And, you know, I think that previous contributors to this debate have - and I would join in being appreciative of the honourable Minister for giving a wider discourse to the Parliament and to the wider public of Barbados on the role of the National Conservation Commission, not only as it relates to environmental protection and stability of Barbados, but to the wider socioeconomic aspect of the country and the touristic aspect of the country. The significance of this statutory corporation is probably not recognised all the time, but it is an extremely important institution. It is fundamental to the development process of

this country, to the future of Barbados. And its role, in fact, was recognised when in 1998, it gained the Minister of Tourism Award for Organisations at the Tourism Awards ceremony in December of that year. But I would wish, Mr. Speaker, to lend some of my experience as chairman of this commission for four years in the late 1990s to this debate. We first really and truly have to concede on all sides that traditionally the commission has been used to a large extent for political purposes. I am not going to sugarcoat the issue. As the Hon. Minister of

Environment stated, it started out as the Parks and Beaches Commission, the precursor of the National Conservation Commission. And we would recollect that, in fact, in the by-election in 1976, early in 1976, when the Democratic Labour Party government was on its way out, the then candidate for Bridgetown in that by-election was chairman of the Parks and Beaches Commission. And I could see they had, like right now in the Advocate newspaper, sir - 244 people came on to the commission, largely from the city of Bridgetown, to work at the Parks and Beaches Commission, to try to help that DLP candidate win the seat, but he lost. Dame Billie Miller, as she now is, won by close to 500 votes - 488 votes, if you check the records. And that should really and truly be testimony to the fact that you should not use these statutory corporations for political purposes of such a nakedly inappropriate position.

And then in the early 1980s - I believe it was 1981 - the National Conservation Commission Act came into force, giving the commission wider scope also to deal with caves, as we know, because Harrison's Cave was being developed then under the great political combination of the Right Honourable Tom Adams government. But, you know, look, we need to - and to his credit, the Honourable Minister, he spouted good rhetoric this morning. I think that we on this side certainly, and the wider public, want to see action behind that rhetoric and not just words. We need to clearly define the role of the National Conservation Commission as a transformative organisation in this country that has its pride of place in terms of development. And in so doing, some decisions have to be made on the issue. The honourable Minister spoke about the need for the commission to lessen its financial dependence on central government. And we understood that, especially in today's age with Barbados still now in its seventh straight year of economic depression under the Democratic Labour Party government. But how do we translate that into reality?

Now, it has been debated for many years as to whether the National Conservation Commission should be competing with the private sector for contracts - landscape maintenance contracts, for instance. I do not know. And it would be good to hear from the Minister in his wrap-up whether the National Conservation Commission still does landscape maintenance work. And I think he did imply yes, on a lot of government departments. I know that the NCC used to do the landscape maintenance, for instance, for the BIDC and for other government entities as well as private. In a lot of cases, it used to be the case that these government departments would not pay NCC for the work, whereas they could not take that chance if these contracts were farmed out to the private sector. The issue, though, also arises as to whether the NCC as a government agency, manipulated through political operatives to a large extent, does these jobs, these contracts, as efficiently as the private sector would do it. Clearly, though, these are issues that a

government has to come to terms with and deal with and come to some policy decision on. Yes, we need for the commission to help earn its way to lessen the dependence on central government financially. But to what extent do we wish government departments competing against the private sector? The issue of the size of government comes into play.

It is true that when I was chairman of the commission, the then Barbados Labour Party administration under the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter put a cap on employment at NCC. I believe it was 984 persons. The honourable Minister today said that the employment ratio of the commission is now down to just over 600. And of course we all know what happened just over a year and a half ago with over 200 being unceremoniously and disgracefully laid off and made redundant without a care in the world - after the government said, for instance, that it will not retrench more than one person from the same household. It was done. And from all indications, naked intervention of the honourable Minister really and truly against the policy of cabinet of last in, first out. And we speak about governance and all of these fancy words that the Democratic Labour Party says it stands for, but yet we see ministerial intervention that breaches cabinet policy. And the Right Honourable Prime Minister sitting by, and all he says is that the decision was very, very, very poor - I think he used the word "very" on three occasions.

Between the retrenchment of the NCC workers and those of Beautify Barbados, which was done four months previously, I know the honourable member for Christ Church West Central might very well say or be able to tell his constituents, "Well, you know, look, I saved your jobs." But then, honourable ministers have a duty not only to their own constituents but to the whole public. They are ministers of all of Barbados and not within the selfish zone of their constituents. And to be heard to say, to protect the jobs of their constituents to the detriment of others in Barbados - and Barbados is a small nation, everybody is related, everybody has relatives in other constituencies, everybody has relatives and friends in both parties. The strongest DLP supporters and members in this country, sometimes their best friends and their spouses are strong members of the BLP. And therefore, as government ministers, the Democratic Labour Party needs to hold on trust and to take the whole country in mind.

And even now, 20 months after the dismissal of these over 200 workers, they still cannot get a redress from this newly created Employment Rights Tribunal - still unable. Having started two months ago, still obviously no conclusion to this. And many of these over 200 who were unceremoniously dismissed have not been able to find employment either through other courses or through self-employment yet, because again a fundamental mistake was

made by the Democratic Labour Party government: you let go of these over 200 workers among the 4 000 who were retrenched without devoting any thought, and you do not put anything in place for them. As the Honourable Member for St. Thomas stated in her speech, really and truly, provisions should have been made for these workers if you are letting them go like cattle. Provisions should have been made somewhere along the lines for them to take over the maintenance of the highways. Encourage them to form groups, give them the technical support, give them the human resource training. Let them join together as entrepreneurs as our ancestors would have done in previous years post-slavery. Give them that opportunity to join together to form businesses, firms, co-ops, whatever you want to call them - partnerships - that they then will do the work, rather than to give these contracts to the big three in Barbados whose pockets are being grossly magnified for some reason or another by a Democratic Labour Party cabinet that used to boast that it was for the small black man. And it is significant, of course, that the DLP does not even mouth that propagandistic rhetoric anymore.

We have to look at other issues relating to the NCC. As I said, the NCC - and I would be the first to praise it as a former chairman - is a tremendous organisation in terms of the development of this country. But when last - and the honourable Minister has to take responsibility for this, because the Democratic Labour Party in its manifesto and repeated all the time speaks towards their goal and their mandate of envisioning a Barbados that is characterised by good governance - but yet we have a situation where the last report on activities of the National Conservation Commission that was laid in this Parliament was laid on the October 5, 2011, exactly four years ago. And that was for the period 2002 to 2003. Now I know that members such as the Hon. Minister and the Hon. Member for St. Lucy are going to jump up and say that period was a period of the Barbados Labour Party. But the fact is the Democratic Labour Party government came in on this transparency and accountability principle and issues of good governance. And no report for the National Conservation Commission for the last 12 years has been laid in this Parliament, when the Act governing the NCC clearly states that within no later than six months of the end of each financial year, the commission shall submit to the Minister a report on its activities. And then within three months of that period, the Minister shall lay the report in Parliament. So maybe the Minister needs to inform this Parliament and this country whether he has been getting these reports from the commission, which is under his mandate, within the six-month period, and whether it is indeed his fault for not bringing them to Parliament within three months after, because he has to take the responsibility on the issue.

The question also arises as to whether the NCC is one of those statutory corporations that continues to owe a

tremendous amount of arrears of NIS - where NIS monies are taken out from the workers' salaries and are not paid over to the NIS. I certainly would be very interested in knowing what, if any, NIS arrears are owed by the commission, because again this has serious implications in terms of the governance of the commission and other areas.

The Minister spoke about the nursery and garden centre of the commission, and of course again we know about that because under my chairmanship that was developed and brought in a few hundred thousand dollars at the time, which would have helped pay at least the salaries of those who worked in the area. But again I would hope that greater efficiency has been brought to bear on this aspect of the commission, because again this is an area in which the NCC is competing against the private sector - those nurseries that have been established in the country and employing Barbadians as well. And we have to look at that area as well.

As was stated, and I listened to the honourable Minister very carefully on this, his desire to see greener spaces in Barbados - and of course the NCC is statutorily mandated to create these green spaces. We know that Barbados, of course, is a small country. We have to face that fact. The honourable member for St. James Central, my colleague, spoke about Malaysia, and yes, he is correct in so doing. I could speak again about Singapore, which we use as a model for countries not much bigger than us and historically similar, coming out of colonialism about the same time. And yes, in Singapore there are a lot of green spaces in the city, and we need to aim for that, because we do not have those kinds of green spaces in our city of Bridgetown and indeed in other parts of highly travelled Barbados. And certainly we on this side would wish to give the Minister support on that issue, because we can all appreciate the aesthetic and psychological value, the spiritual value, of having green spaces in a country such as ours.

On that point, certainly yes, we take the issue about the NCC having created about 50 parks in this country. I would wish to urge the Hon. Minister - and I could certainly put forward areas in St. James North where such similar parks could be created - because besides the national park of Folkestone, which borders the constituency of my colleague the Honourable Member for St. James Central and mine, there are no community play parks in St. James North. And I think St. James North may very well be the only constituency in the island in which there are no community play parks. I know an issue may relate to the fact that a lot of the constituency parts that are uninhabited are in zone one, and therefore that issue arises. But certainly the zone one issue, which affects largely St. James North but also other constituencies like that of the Honourable Member for St. Michael East - the zone one issue, I think, is an issue that has to be tackled by the

government. We cannot have such large areas of certain constituencies, including mine, under the mandate of zone one. In this age of technology and development in 2015, we have to be able to lessen the zone one areas and to be able to create beautiful spaces in areas such as St. James North, not only environmentally but in terms of commercial advancement as well.

The issue also needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, of the granting of licences by the National Conservation Commission to individuals to sell on beaches and public parks - an area for which NCC is given mandate as being the commission responsible for those public places. And, you know, in a lot of cases - and again, we have to speak honestly - in a lot of these cases, these licences are given arbitrarily based on somebody making a phone call and saying, "Grant a licence." And we have to give greater transparency on these areas.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I am hearing the honourable member for St. Lucy - he said earlier on that junior members should not be debating against senior members, and I should not be debating against him. The fact of the matter, of course, is that even though he has been around here for a long time, two decades, he is viewed as a junior member anyway. So that is why he always wants to be responding to me. But I accept that system of reality in terms of the politics of the Democratic Labour Party, Mr. Speaker.

But these licences need to be - this needs to be a transparent process in terms of granting licences. I have written in to the commission on a few occasions about the granting of licences. To my knowledge, the individuals did not have any criminal records, were able to produce a police certificate of clear character, which is one of the criteria. But still you hear nothing from the commission on the issue. But, you know, poor people must be able to work. And if they are being dismissed by government in their thousands, and obviously the private sector under pressure as well - since the Democratic Labour Party came into office - has dismissed close to 20 000 persons as well. People have to find self-employment, and this is a way. And if people are prepared and wish to carry out legitimate businesses in public spaces owned by the people of Barbados, they should be allowed to do so without the intervention of the political operators that we have.

We have the issue which has been mentioned by earlier honourable members in this debate of beach erosion, and members have linked that to the management of the coast, and all of it is tied in. Mr. Speaker, as has been said, coastal management, NCC, and the strong desire and importance of keeping our beaches and not having them eroded, whether by virtue of climate change or otherwise - we need to ensure, and NCC has a role to play in this, that our beaches are rehabilitated. In Road View in my

constituency, Mr. Speaker, this is a problem. I have written the ministry and indeed the Minister on this issue previously. I do not know that anything has been done. What I have heard is that I believe an IDB loan of about \$7 million US, which was voted on in this Parliament last year, may be used to help in this area. I do not know, because I recall that debate being sometime early last year and I have not seen anything being done as yet. So I would certainly wish to urge the honourable Minister to ensure that something is done in the constituency of St. James North and certainly along the whole west coast to protect the sanctity of the beaches and the coast there, because these areas are of fundamental importance - as my colleague the Honourable Member for St. James Central said - to our tourism, development, and progress, which is so vital to our economic development in this country.

Tied in, of course, to the NCC, Mr. Speaker, is the whole issue of Beautify Barbados. Beautify Barbados was a separate department set up under the last Barbados Labour Party administration to enhance the work of the NCC. Granted, Mr. Speaker, these workers had been put on contract by the Barbados Labour Party government at the start of their employment - contracts, I believe, varying of two, three years.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have five minutes of which to conclude.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Yes, yes, Mr. Speaker. It then went down to one year under the Democratic Labour Party government. But it cannot be right, Mr. Speaker, that you are able to dismiss close to 70 workers by one week's notice or one week's pay in lieu of notice - not in the day and age of 2014, as was done last year. We have come out of the 1930s when workers in this country, as the Moyne Commission said, had not advanced much beyond the immediate post-slavery period. And again, that was not the way to treat these workers by just dismissing them with one week's salary and not seeing about their future. And I would urge the honourable Minister to relook at that. I know the officials of his department, when those workers were demonstrating in front of his office, came out and said that they will have a look at the issue. You have heard nothing public since then. And I think that the Hon. Minister has a duty not only to those workers, but to the workers of Barbados and the unions, to speak on this matter and give these workers just due.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, comes up as well as to what is going on at Waterford, which is the home and headquarters of the National Conservation Commission. The Minister this morning just by the by mentioned the development of a botanical garden at Waterford. But we have heard - and when I say "we", the public have heard, and it has been mentioned in the press - of developments in this area. And this area apparently is supposed to be a water

zone as well. So the Minister, I believe, while - as I said, we are appreciative of his discourse this morning expanding at length on NCC - he also needs to address in a wider way what the plans are for Waterford: if it is a botanical garden, if it is going to be solar energy use, whatever - and to assure the residents of the surrounding areas that it will not affect the sanctity of their water supplies.

Mr. Speaker, to wrap up - as I said, we on both sides commend the role of the National Conservation Commission, the role it has played in terms of the development of parks and beaches and the environment in this country. I must say, and I must mention here, King George V Park - a beautiful part of Barbados, I think it is in St. Philip North. Every year I take schoolchildren from two of the primary schools in my constituency there on an educational tour. And certainly we need - and there is no political divide on this - these kinds of areas in Barbados for the development of not only our environment, but the social and spiritual being of our people, both young and old.

But we have to stop as politicians using the National Conservation Commission as a political football - where you dismiss over 200 workers, some of whom have been there 15, 20, 25 years, many of whom I knew from when I was chairman - just to act against the policy of your own cabinet, which was last in, first out. And that is not the way to develop the environment in Barbados. That is not the way to develop good governance in this country. And we need to properly deal with the finances of the NCC, bring to Parliament for public scrutiny the records of the commission, and not have it lingering for 12 years. Let us see what the commission is doing, because this is what we need. This Parliament is supposed to be the watchdog for government agencies, and we cannot operate as a cabinet in secret - some closed-door issue - when the Democratic Labour Party came into office in 2008 on accountability and a mandate to have post-cabinet meetings after every cabinet on Thursday. And that has not been done. We still have a far way to go in terms of governance of the commission, in terms of transforming the commission, in terms of the development of the role of the commission as a primary agency - even more than it has done in the past - in terms of the socioeconomic and environmental development of this country. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So I thank you very much for the opportunity to make a very brief contribution. First of all, let me congratulate the Honourable Minister responsible for the environment and of course by extension responsible for the National Conservation Commission for the outstanding work which

he and his staff have been doing in relation to the environment in Barbados generally and specifically for those areas that the National Conservation Commission has direct responsibility for.

He has been doing so under very stringent circumstances - financially, of course, because we have all had to contain our exuberance for doing all those wonderful things that we want to do to assist Barbados and Barbadians in procuring the soundest possible environment that we can have in the circumstances. And with few resources - in some respects, people may say dwindling resources - the Honourable Member and his team have been able to do an outstanding job. In fact, if one compares what the NCC has been able to do under these circumstances and under the leadership of the Minister, compared to when we had a lot of money flowing all around, we could easily say without fear of contradiction that the leadership and management of the NCC and of course the Ministry as the parent ministry responsible has been nothing short of outstanding in relation to doing and executing the mandate for which they have been given by the Government.

So I want to thank the Minister - in particular to thank the Minister for his work with the Ministry of Finance and his team - and I know he said it in his speech, that the Ministry is very persistent, Finance that is, in trying to get across the message to statutory corporations that they have a responsibility to the public of Barbados, they have a responsibility to their staff and they have a responsibility to the overall Government to be as efficient and productive as possible, ensuring that we get the maximum bang for our buck. I apologise for the overused cliché term, but that we get the highest return for the monies that we invest in all of these areas of public service and public goods that we deliver to the public.

Because at the end of the day, and I will speak to this more specifically, Mr. Speaker, sir, we do not have a large extensive pot of resources from which to draw. And to the extent that we have constraints, we have to be able to do things better, faster, more efficiently and of course getting it right the first time. Because we simply do not have the luxury as other governments have had in the past and perhaps some may have in the future, I do not know. But we certainly do not have the luxury of doing things wrong the first time, hoping to get another opportunity to do it over. We simply do not have that type of space.

I was intrigued by the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. James North. Intrigued only because of his amazing capacity to befall himself into a state of total oblivion as to even his own responsibilities. One would have thought that the first stanza of his presentation should have been an apology to the public of Barbados for having presided over as chairman of the NCC

for four or five years as he stated, whilst they were collecting fees and charges from the public without legal validation. And he is an attorney-at-law.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He has been Minister of Finance, a senior Cabinet member of this Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just let me hear. Misleading the House. Just a minute please. How is he misleading?

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: The Democratic Labour Party Government - his Government - has to take responsibility. And this is one of the problems that we face where this Government does not take responsibility. The fees that he speaks about came in, as I see it here, from 1990 when the Democratic Labour Party was in office. And they continued to be in office for four years after that. And they have now been in office for eight years now as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: I remember a whole 12 years. It has now been done. I am not giving a chance to make another speech.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: [Inaudible.]

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: very much. And I hope that I can regain the minute that I would have lost from that non-intervention. Mr. Speaker, sir, the honourable member should have begun his speech by conceding that he, as an attorney-at-law and as chairman of the board of a statutory corporation, should have indicated to his minister at the time that he or she was proceeding without the legal authority to do so. But he hasn't done that. Just as he has not accepted the responsibility, just as he wanted to place on the Government now the blame for not bringing to Parliament - six months after the financial year ended - audited financial statements, financial reports for the NCC from 2002. I don't understand. I am really at a loss as to how this administration, which was in opposition at the time, would have been expected to bring financial reports for the NCC six months after 2002. So the honourable member clearly does not want to accept responsibility for anything.

But I think that we should set some things straight, because the honourable member has a way - very, very quietly - because of course, when he is delivering his speech, you would really think he is speaking to himself. But we know sometimes somebody might be listening abroad, not in here, because usually members on either side of the bench don't listen to anything he has to say. But there may be somebody outside of the Parliament who is

listening to him when he is delivering his speech inadvertently.

And the honourable member made the point - and I think it was a point that he was picking up from the member for St. Thomas - that the Government of Barbados designed and offered a contract to some selected few to do the Adopt-a-Kilometre programme. And as far as I know, and I perhaps stand subject to correction, but I say without fear of contradiction, Adopt-a-Kilometre is not a contract. It was not a contract delivered from Government to anybody. It is a collaborative, voluntary effort by members of the private sector who designed, with the eventual approval of the authorities, a programme to look after the highways of Barbados - the shoulders and the verges of the highways of Barbados. I think it is a true and genuine national effort to ensure that the country's highways are maintained in a proper state.

Now, it was not a mystery, because it was happening even before we were in Government - yes, before we were in Government - that the maintenance, and I think the honourable member for Christ Church South, who was the former Minister of Transport and Works, made that point, that even where the state agencies had gone and cleaned and debushed and trimmed the highways, the consistent maintenance of them started to fall behind. In fact, I remember distinctly that the former Director of Finance had called a meeting of all of the parties involved. I chaired the meeting. But the Director had a very strong influence in having that meeting called. And we called all of the people involved - MTW, NCC, the Beautify Barbados Heritage Division and so forth and so on, responsible for the then Beautify Barbados outfit. And I will get to that. And we all expressed a collective concern for what was happening.

And people who are genuinely interested in the development of Barbados came forward with some ideas, because that idea of doing collaborative work with members of the private sector didn't start with the private sector. Those expressions were then within the Government service about ways in which we could share the responsibility and reduce the cost that Government had to bear to deal with this - both in terms of human resources cost but also equipment costs. And they came up with what is a beautiful programme that has been functioning and doing exceedingly well. I didn't even know it had stretched all past Warrens, because originally it wasn't intended to go that far. But it has now gone all past Warrens and going down the other part - Westmoreland and going down. And it really is, I think, a fine example of how private and public can collaborate to produce results in Barbados.

It is not true, Mr. Speaker, sir, for anybody to suggest that the programme was designed as some sinister effort to dismiss people from the NCC or from Beautify Barbados or the Ministry of Transport. That is absolutely

not the case. It is even more egregious for any member of Parliament to suggest that the Government of Barbados was designing this programme to fast-forward to some notion I heard in here about slavery - that slavery is done, and that someone drove down the highway and saw some black boys in jeans cutting the verge and a white man standing above them. I mean, really, is that the level to which we in Barbados have sunk in relation to the discourse that we are going to have on these fundamental issues?

But if you go into several business establishments in Barbados - no, I am not running any philanthropic thing. On the member for St. Michael East, who is my friend - Mr. Speaker, sir, the honourable member is, or used to term himself, a radical non-conformist Marxist-Leninist revolutionary who is now the greatest defender of the manor-born plantocracy of Barbados, with the late so-called leftist forces that he hears in his ears at night that nobody knows anything about. So I am not going to that level. I am not running any philanthropy on anybody.

I am saying that if you are serious about the development of Barbados - if you are telling me you want to integrate into the operations, the policy, the build-out, the structuring of a Barbadian society, economy and environment - and you are telling me that you are to reject somebody and reject somebody's idea, if it is a good idea that can advance the country, on the basis that the optics of it or the appearance of it to some unenlightened person look as though we are going back to the 1930s - it is silliness of the highest order. And I pass on from that, Mr. Speaker, sir.

Because that is just as bad as the honourable member for St. James North trying to suggest - and others who spoke here on the other side - that the Government of Barbados, whom they claim is cash-strapped, and we don't deny that, who they claim don't have the money to do these things, and we don't deny that, should take on a whole set of people in a debushing programme. And the question is, Mr. Speaker, sir, what are you going to pay them with if you do not have the money? In fact, Mr. Speaker, sir, it is that type of thing that got this country in the condition that it is in today.

And that is why I said I would speak specifically about Beautify Barbados. Because Beautify Barbados started as a temporary programme for the World Cup 2007 under the last administration - a temporary programme that began in 2005 and expanded in preparation for the World Cup. A whole lot of people were brought on, some people working three days, no status, no provisions for them at all, no budgetary expenditure placed, just being paid out of this programme. And that programme was in a state of limbo, suspended animation from the Government's budget. It is a fact. It is a fact to the extent where the Government could

not find the resources to be able to continue that programme as it was then currently structured. And that is exactly what we were saddled with. We were saddled with a bad piece of public planning, policy and execution of administration in relation to Beautify Barbados.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, sir, I believe that the unions of this country, particularly the NUPW, had to write the last Government, as they wrote this one, about the status of those workers and a particular gratuity payment which they were supposed to be given but were not provisioned for at all by the last administration. So all of these crocodile tears that you hear from the honourable members - it is just that they want to give the workers, or the former workers, the impression that they care so much about them, when it is they who put them in the position to be so compromised that this administration had at the end of the day no choice, when things got tighter than we expected, to have to send those workers home. You had workers, people working at Beautify Barbados on three-day contracts or three-day existence - can't go into town, no status, couldn't go into town, get a hire-purchase, couldn't get a loan, couldn't do anything whatsoever.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, sir, I know that was a fundamental practice. I know that it was a policy of theirs - a policy for political employment - because the member for St. Michael East knows only too well, because he was part of the regime, and I am not talking about the overall Government, even though they take responsibility too. He was part of the regime that brought on all of the workers at the National Assistance Board without, again, proper and appropriate fiscal provision for them, paying them out of some nebulous account called Professional Services and putting them on three days a week too. And the majority of them came out of St. Michael East, in which the honourable member and his organisation started a course called Care of the Elderly - a certificate in six months and you are straight to the NAB as a trainee and never come off after that. And before we got into office, they almost doubled the staff at NAB under his leadership, both when he was a minister and when he was before that - as the honourable, late member for St. John called him in an article - the adviser, when he was the adviser to the minister and then when he was the minister himself.

So I know it was a deliberate policy. And I don't mean that you shouldn't provide jobs for people - you give them jobs - but don't come to prosecute the Government if you bundle up people in the Government, make no fiscal provision for them, and when things get tight, the Democratic Labour Party administration, poor DLP, has to take tough decisions in order to save Barbados and some people have to go home. You really have to be a little bit more honest. You can be as disingenuous as you want.

I spoke about the NCC. I am getting to the NCC now. Mr. Speaker, sir, the point of the matter is this. You hear all of this debate and each member gets up: we want this done, we want that done, we want the next done, we want this park here, we want this area debushed, there are too many overgrown lots in my constituency, what is this body doing about this? And not one of them can tell you where the money is going to come from to do all of these things. Mr. Speaker, sir, nobody is going to tell you that. And the reality is this - and that is why I congratulate the honourable minister - there just is not enough money to satisfy the demand for all the services that people require from an agency such as the NCC. It is just not fiscally possible. So we have to get into a mode of prioritising our expenditure to deal with those areas that are most critical in the provision of social public goods to the wider public of Barbados. That is what we have to do. And that is what the honourable minister has been trying to do with his staff.

Look, we can't do everything. So what are the things that are most critical to people - to ensuring the protection of the environment, the enhancement of the community, the provision of services that will maintain public health? These are the things which the minister and his team have been doing. And we have called on all of these agencies to do that type of work. And that is why we are here today. Because the honourable member and his team recognise that there is a certain cost recovery that we need to engage for these services. We cannot pretend in 2015 that we can deliver the vast array of services while receiving a return that is really dated to 1999. It is just not feasible. It really is not feasible. Ministers spoke about it costing about \$40 000-odd to do a simple park - \$45 000 to \$50 000 to do a simple park. And the demands on the NCC for parks, as you have heard in the House today, are just extensive. And each time they have to do that, they have to shell out money, and then they have to maintain them.

Because this is the other thing, and I think one of the things the NCC should look at, if they are not already doing so, is again building collaborative relationships with communities and businesses within communities to take up at least some part of the maintenance, if not all, of these installations as they place them across the country. I think we have reached the point where if you go to a community and you expend \$50 000 to put down a play park or a small botanical park for members' relaxation and recreation, that members of the community should accept some responsibility for keeping that in some kind of shape, rather than having to see it overgrown by bush and then send an MP into Parliament or call the NCC every day to harass the NCC to come and cut some grass and so forth and so on. We have to be able to accept some of those responsibilities to ease the agencies, because if we do that, it means that they can then take the resources that they would have been expending on maintenance and go to other parks in other communities and build them up.

The honourable member for St. James Central gave a very responsible presentation in here this afternoon. He spoke very well. It is one of those rare occasions on which you could say he really was able to keep a train of thought for longer than ten minutes and we were very satisfied and benefited from it. One point he did make that was of interest to me was the point - and I know he is making it as a representative of a suburban area in particular - about the open lots issue. And yes, as a potential soon-to-be future leader of the Barbados Labour Party, he really filled in the shoes very, very nicely and he really rallied the troops.

Now, the point that he made in relation to the open lots - this is a good point, Mr. Speaker, sir. He should not for any minute though believe that the Government has not canvassed that point. In fact, we have had extensive discussions about Government agencies pruning and cutting people's lots of all the bush that is overgrown and looking at how we can claim it back from them by way of a charge on their land tax bills. We have looked at that, but we have been advised that some of that has challenges because that would be a residual charge on a statutory imposition, and therefore the person could pay the land tax bill and ignore that charge, because you have no penalty to charge them - that would not be considered to be a land tax charge but rather a residual charge for the maintenance of the lot. So we canvassed that. But he is right. It is bothersome that people have land in Barbados, they say they are keeping it for their children and their grandchildren or they are not ready to build, and they just allow it to be overgrown by bush. I have it in my own community, my own district at home. I get somebody to cut it down for me. But other people don't have the wherewithal to do that, and therefore you can't expect everybody to do that. But it is a big environmental challenge because it costs money to do that.

And people really say, let us do a debushing programme. A debushing programme is not \$500 000. A debushing programme could cost as much as \$2 to \$3 million. So it is not a small amount of money. It costs quite a bit of money. In fact, one of the things that we found when we became the Governing Administration again, Mr. Speaker, sir, was a whole wide array of debushing programmes. In fact, almost every ministry had a civil debushing programme - MCC had one, the Ministry of Health had one, the Environment had one. So we know that it was an employment-generating device of the Barbados Labour Party. No, I am not attacking them. I am not attacking them. I am very pro-worker. I am pro-worker sustainably. You are pro-worker temporarily. You want to satisfy workers temporarily with all kinds of crash programmes to make them feel good, and then when the money runs out, they have to be laid off - not your problem, it is somebody else's. I want them to be working sustainably over the medium and long term. And that is the fundamental difference between this party and that one.

I don't say that we don't need a debushing programme - we need it. And where resources are available, we will put people in to do that. But that is not sustainable employment. And we have to find a way to be able to ensure that when we put people on the line of Government's payroll, there are sufficient resources to sustain them over time so that they are not challenged by the spectre of unemployment every time there is a dip in our economic circumstances. That is what the fundamental mission of a Government ought to be. Not that you won't have temporary programmes from time to time - we all do them. But we have to look to employ people sustainably. And in order to do that, we have to manage our resources carefully.

I know, I know. You get knocked on the ballpark in the first park. So, Mr. Speaker, sir, the point that I'm making. The point that I'm making is that we have to plan and provision for the provision of these social services in a responsible manner fiscally. If we do not do that, Mr. Speaker, sir, we run to compromise the very programmes that we all claim that we want, the services that we need, and the attention to our community and our environment that we so desire. That is the point that I am making this evening. I think that the honourable minister and his team has faced up to these realities. It has not been easy. I know the minister has been - you know, he has pushed, he has devised, he has recalibrated, he has changed. He has done a lot of things to ensure that these agencies continue to function effectively within our communities. I am satisfied that in the constraints they are doing so. And I congratulate the Minister in that regard. Much abused as it is by members of the opposition, slandered and defamed and all of that in the context of his work. Few can deny that this Minister of the Environment has performed credibly in keeping Barbados - not only domestically, by the way - keeping us to a stage where we are able to be proud of our environment. But externally as well, overseas. The Minister has been recognised for his outstanding work in this particular regard.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I want to close by again congratulating my colleague for bringing this validation bill here, for cleaning up all of the bad work of the opposition and making sure that we are on good legal ground. And I say to him, to continue to do your work, press ahead, continue to be responsible and efficient, even as we continue to give you our fullest support in the face of the difficulties that you have been facing in the Ministry as far as the finances are concerned. And with those few words, Mr. Speaker, sir, I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, I participate in the debate and I first of all want to

compliment the Minister for at least pointing out the initiatives that the National Conservation Commission are engaged in at the moment. And Mr. Chairman, it also speaks to the fact that very often we do not appreciate the services that statutory bodies provide. The fact that the services that they provide also ties in with the general objectives of the government. And Mr. Chairman, we also know that one of the issues that we talk about consistently in this country is the environment and the maintenance of an environment for Barbadians that is sustainable. And to the extent that the National Conservation Commission plays a very critical role in maintaining a sustainable environment for Barbadians cannot be underestimated.

And Mr. Chairman - sorry, Mr. Speaker, sir - we know that work comes under a considerable cost that has to happen because when we look and see how our beaches are maintained on a daily basis, when we observe and see some of the work that is done in certain communities. Because I really also want to speak to the fact that in Belfield, in St. Michael West Central, the National Conservation Commission, sir, plays a very critical role in the maintenance of that park there. I know recently, because of the heavy rains that came about recently, that we have had a situation where the grass has been overgrown. I do hope by now that the Commission has addressed that particular issue, but it has played a critical role in terms of maintaining those community parks and all of it comes at a cost. I think that we have to give the government credit that despite the critical economic times that we are faced with, they have by and large been able to maintain the parks in our communities to an extent where our children are still able to enjoy the facilities offered by those parks. And that, sir, does not come - it is not something that we should belittle. And I think that we have to give the National Conservation Commission and the Minister applause for the fact that they have been able still to fulfil their mandate in that regard.

And Mr. Chairman, you know, when I listen to some members of the opposition - we continue, sir, to give the impression to Barbadians that there are not Barbadians who have learned from the National Conservation Commission what they can do in their own communities in order to make it a cleaner, healthier and a more sustainable environment. Because one of the mandates that I think that we have to give credit to this government for is the fact that we have shown a general commitment to developing a more sustainable environment. And in that regard, the National Conservation Commission has taken the lead, and in many ways they have taken the lead.

I know, for instance, in a part of the constituency of St. Michael West Central, in Marshall Parkinson Road to be precise, that we have a lady there - I will not mention her name - who has engaged in the planting of the most beautiful flowers around her house. And I said that

initiative on her part came about as a result of her involvement in the National Conservation Commission. And it shows you that the work that the National Conservation Commission is doing is having an impact. And not only that too, sir, it shows that Barbadians are beginning to appreciate what is involved, and the necessity - which we must understand now, at this point in time where government is challenged for funds - the necessity of Barbadians contributing to making the environment in which they are part of safer and more attractive to the residents. And that lady is not paid. And that is the point I think we need to make.

And I think the member for St. James South missed that point. That in a sense we talk a lot about the fact that we need to encourage volunteerism, that we need to encourage a greater sense of community responsibility. But if we do it from the point of view that we do not recognise that there are things which we can do in our communities as a group of people together to help maintain that environment, that is where the message is lost. And I think sometimes that when we look at it from a political perspective, we find people get lost in it. And I think that we want to compliment persons like that lady in Marshall Parkinson Road who does that in terms of the effort that is being made in that regard.

I also point to another area in St. Michael West Central, and that is out by what we would call St. Stephen's Landing Scheme. There is a gentleman there and I talk about ordinary Barbadians - and this gentleman is not being paid for it - because I want to debunk the myth that we have Barbadians who are not aware of their responsibilities in the environment and who also are not prepared to contribute to maintaining a good environment. This gentleman, as far as I could recall, has been one of the principal persons there to clean up that environment on a consistent basis. As a matter of fact, he has taken the time to plant some extremely beautiful flowers in that environment to the point where the residents around there admire him for that. And he takes a personal interest in terms of trying to ensure that the garbage in that particular area around St. Stephen's Landing Scheme is kept under control. That happens in our community. So it tells you that there is something that we can actually start to build from, that there is something happening in our communities that we need to take advantage of and that we should not belittle or seek to ignore the activities of such people in our communities, but to see how we can build on it and get even greater involvement of more members in our communities. That is what we should be doing. And I think that is where the initiative needs to go further.

I want to say that even before we were talking about the whole area of renewable energy and water harvesting, I want to compliment the NCC for taking the lead and the initiative in those two areas. It was one of the few agencies

of government that went about moving towards showing Barbadians and Barbadian businesses - and especially Barbadian businesses - that you can move ahead in terms of investing in renewable energy in two ways. One, they went ahead and invested in a renewable energy generation system for electricity. And when I went and looked at it, Mr. Chairman, I must admit that the staff at the NCC did an excellent job at the time. And I think we have to give them credit for it. And in many ways, when you look and see what is happening in the private sector, you can see that they in themselves look at the model that the NCC had established. And not only that, it gives people greater confidence that these things can be done. And I think again, we have to give them credit for it.

In addition to that, the whole question of water harvesting - again, they have set up a system and people should visit it, because sometimes we in Barbados are not aware of what we are doing, what our government is doing, what our agencies are doing. And I think that somehow we tend to belittle them. Take a visit and you can see that they have a whole system set up inside there of water harvesting that I think again a lot of businesses in our country will do well to look at and to understand that depending on how you design things, you can actually achieve them. And I think that we have to give the NCC credit for that. But it came, yes, with a measure of investment that needed to be done. But the point is, it was done. The point really comes, though, when we recognise that it came at a cost. And I think really in that regard, it was disappointing to hear the opposition compare what is happening now against what was happening before.

Let us admit that the previous government had an opportunity - which they wasted - to engage in these projects. They had an opportunity even before 2008 to move ahead in the whole area of renewable energy electricity generation and to use the agencies of state, such as the National Conservation Commission, in order to show Barbadians what were the possibilities, what could be done. And I think, let us be frank and let us admit it, that what they did is that they deluded themselves into thinking that the way it was then it could have continued for the foreseeable future. And that clearly is where they misled Barbadians as to what the possibilities were and where the agencies such as the NCC should have had their efforts directed even then. So in that regard, here it is that under a period where we have limited resources, the NCC has been able to show and demonstrate effectively to Barbadians what is possible.

And you know, again, under conservation we talk about what we would call sustainable development. The NCC has also proceeded to forge partnerships with other aspects of Barbadian commercial activity. Because I think really that whole issue that the Ministry has raised about the whole area of beekeeping is something that we should

not lose sight of, because most persons who are involved in agriculture will tell you that bees are extremely important to the pollination of crops. Extremely important. And the fact that personnel at the NCC have played a critical role and are now playing a critical role in the development of our local beekeeping industry - to the point that recently we had a seminar in which they were heavily involved - I know that we can expect continued support in that area and to show Barbadians that a resource that we actually took for granted, we can now have the opportunity to develop. So it shows you that the NCC is moving in ways that they understand - one, the current challenges facing Barbadians, and two, what are the voids that they need to fill in order to make sure that we can create a more sustainable environment for Barbadians.

And when I say sustainable, principally what I mean is this: that we all know around the world that if you do not have bees around, flowers cannot get pollinated, that even certain basic crops that we talk about cannot get pollinated. And if that happens, of course that is trouble for our food production. This is something that we need to pay attention to. And I really think that when you look at agencies that are doing that kind of creative response to the economic challenges that Barbadians face, I think that we have to give it credit. And the fact that they are doing it at this point in time with limited resources is something that we have to give them credit for.

And, you know, I think it was kind of difficult to hear the opposition saying - or implying to Barbadians - that this government would have taken great pleasure in sending home anybody. I think that it is the most mischievous - I do not know if it is unparliamentary to say this, but wicked, sir - piece of propaganda that anyone can perpetrate. That is what it is. The most wicked and malicious piece of propaganda that you can have perpetrated by an opposition who claim to understand the times that we live in, who claim to understand that there are more limited resources available to this government now than there were in the past. So it comes from the level of mischievousness. It is meant to create confusion in the minds of the ordinary person, because, you know, I can understand someone has gone home and sometimes you have to be able to understand and empathise about that. And the reason principally is that when a lot of those jobs were created, the previous government was borrowing money. That is what they were doing. They were borrowing money. They do not want to tell you that it was not because of the fact that they had a business and they were making profits and they were able to employ anybody. They were going around borrowing money in order to employ Barbadians. We all know that is what it is - such is the mischief.

Now for the opposition to come and say to Barbadians that this government has proceeded to reduce

the number of persons working at the NCC because it takes some great pleasure in doing it - that is wrong. And I think that if we are talking about it, I admire the member for St. James Central when he said that, you know, he recognises what is going on. As a matter of fact, he sounded kind of statesmanlike when he specifically said that he understands why it had to be done. And he showed leadership, which is good for the opposition. But in the meantime, when you hear other members of the opposition, like the member for St. James North - who, by the way, is a lawyer - who then could turn around and say that the reason for this is because there was some intent to do people harm, I do not really think that is far from the truth. Very far from the truth. And I think that we need in this whole discourse to recognise that the times have changed and this government is doing its best in order to ensure that Barbados can continue to enjoy the general level of services that they continue to enjoy from the agencies that are supposed to provide it.

And I want to make an additional point, sir. The honourable members on the other side talked about the fact that they are appalled - deplorable, they said - to see the amount of lots that are out there. And, you know, it is a time like this that we need to remind each other as Barbadians of the responsibility that we have to maintain our environment. And I go back to the first two things I started with: one, the lady from Marshall Parkinson Road, and that gentleman that is in St. Stephen's Landing Scheme who helps maintain that area in which he lives. And these are ordinary people who recognise that they have a responsibility to help keep their own environment. And what I find is unfortunate - that we do not understand in that regard, sir - is the need that property owners in Barbados have to also recognise that we have a responsibility to keep our environments in a certain state and condition that we find pleasing.

And I think I heard the reason given by the Minister of Finance - the Member for St. Michael North West - as to why it is that the moment those persons who have properties that they do not maintain in an appropriate condition, where you are unable to actually transfer any cost that government might incur to the land tax bills of those individuals. I have heard it, but I am saying, you know, the member for St. James North is a lawyer. And maybe the lawyers in this country need to address this issue. I am saying that with the wealth of legal talent that we have in this country, do you want to tell me that we cannot come up with something that helps the government to address this particular issue of landowners who have properties, leave them delinquent and leave them lying there for the state? But they are the first - the member for St. James North will be the first to jump up and say, you see what I tell you, look at how the properties are. And this is the mischief - that you have lawyers who know better, like the member for St. James North, who is a member of

the opposition, who knows better than that, who knows really that in a sense it is a legal issue.

I really think that when you look at it, we need to move quickly, sir, in terms of trying to come up with solutions, trying to find ways of how we can compel landowners who have lots of land lying there. Mr. Speaker, sir, in St. Michael West Central, I can think of a number of properties in Strathclyde, for instance, along that road. And these are properties that have been there for some time and they are, in truth and in fact, yes, causing discomfort to the residents in some cases. We have a situation in this country where the persons who are in proximity to those spots actually pay to get it done. I know a lady who will tell you she has to look for \$450 every so often to get that plot laid off. It is happening. I could think of areas in Grazettes Gardens, for instance. I had to go there recently about an issue. And there are areas there where you cannot find who owns the plot, you cannot find what is going on. And these areas are causing discomfort to the residents in the area. And I think that we need to address that as an issue. And I think Barbadians need to accept the fact that they have a responsibility to maintain lands that they know that they have. And we cannot leave it there to be a nuisance because these areas - you will be surprised - harbour vermin in some cases, and mosquitoes are a major source of discomfort.

And I want to appeal especially on behalf of the residents of St. Michael West Central - and I guess all Barbadians will benefit from that appeal - where if there are individuals who have open spots that need clearing up, do it. And I also want to say to the Minister this: if it is possible, the NCC can offer a service to landowners who might want to engage them, but they have to pay for it, because that is the thing - too many people come and expect services for free. And I think again the opposition needs to hold hands with government. I agree. When I heard the Member for St. James Central say that there are some issues over which there should be no debate, I really think that there is an opportunity for us to see how other people who might have lands that might need some work being done on them - maybe the NCC can give them a reduced rate in terms of getting it done. But the answer is not to tell them that government is at fault, because in truth and in fact government really does not have a responsibility to maintain privately owned lands. It does not have that responsibility. The responsibility to maintain those lands is on the owner. And that is what we need to emphasise.

How do we get away from the type of mendicant relationship that it seems as if the opposition wants to forge in this country? And that is where they exploit voters. Because I guess if they can build that mendicant relationship to make people feel that, you know, you cannot do anything for yourself, you do not have the ability to do it, it strengthens their position, but what it does is that

it diminishes the individual that they are doing that to. And we have to find a way, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this issue. And I really want, therefore, to encourage - maybe first of all, I think that we need to certainly ask the Attorney General's Chambers to look at this issue and see what type of legislation we can come up with that we can at least use to encourage landowners who leave lands there to get all types of bush on it, who do not want to do anything with it, who just leave it like that, and that land is a nuisance. I have areas in St. Michael West Central where people are afraid to walk after a certain time because the bush is overgrown and it forms a hiding spot for thieves and robbers. These are issues that we need to address.

And you know, Mr. Chairman, it is amazing. We talk about wanting to achieve developed country status. You know, we travel to Miami and some of these other countries and we admire Canada and we admire how clean these countries are, but we do not understand that people have to pay in order to get it done. It does not come free. We get the impression that all of this comes free. That, you know, when you go to Miami and you see these beautiful landscaped areas, it is not free. There are taxes being put on individuals, and if you do not do certain things within a certain time, you attract penalties that you pay.

So many of the things that I hear the opposition encouraging Barbados to think - these are just fallacies, it is just not true. And they know that. They know that. It is just not true. And I know, remember for St. Thomas, she is eager to try to say that I should not be saying these things, but the fact of the matter is that you have to tell people the truth. You have two minutes in which to wind it. And that is where I think we can get a better understanding of what two political parties need to address and need to deal with. Because unless we get to that, we cannot move forward. Because whichever party is in power has the same problem, the same issue, because what we are doing - again - we are sending out confused signals as to what is required in order to adequately build what I would call a sustainable environment. And that is what the NCC is precisely trying to do from this particular measure. They are trying to provide an environment in which Barbadians can feel comfortable. An environment in which even if you go into whatever residential neighbourhood and there is a park that is not as the existing Belfield, that they are able to get the amount of resources to be able to maintain that park properly.

And I just reminded the Minister, sir, that that park needs some cleaning after the heavy rains. All I am saying is that is what it facilitates. Because we sometimes do not appreciate that the funds that the previous government were spending before the credit card went out - and we now have to find other ways - because that money goes into the treasury in order to finance the level of services that we provide to residents in Marshall Park, State Road, to

residents in Belfield, to keep the park clear. Because even the other day when we had the community in Belfield, you had to keep the pasture low in Grazettes. Right now, for instance, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where the pasture is high. But I understand that is an issue with the grass cutter out there. I am hoping that when you use these funds, it will help to address that particular issue. These are the issues that we need to deal with. We have to understand that the Government is coming up with creative means in terms of trying to provide these levels of goods and services. And therefore, I want to compliment the Minister for the initiative and the fact that he is seeking to rationalise the situation. I certainly want to indicate, sir, my support on this particular measure. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, sir, let me thank all Honourable Members for their contribution to this discourse today. And let me especially thank the members on this side for their full support of this amendment order. A number of issues were raised, Mr. Speaker, sir, and certainly we have taken notes copiously to ensure that the issues raised can be given attention to and that we ask the Commission to begin to do some additional surveillance around the country to attend to some matters.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas raised some issues about Cane Garden Park and Edge Hill Heights. And I am going to ask them to look into those two issues immediately to ensure that whatever relief we can bring, that we will bring that relief to those residents.

I must confess, Mr. Speaker, sir, that I was really pleased by the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. James Central. I believe the fact that the member took the time to listen very closely to my presentation and to respond to it in a manner that reflected some connection with the facts of the matter before us, but also of his own - I do not want to say maturity, that is not a term that I would prefer to use - but certainly he has demonstrated a kind of understanding and posture that I think is important in his own personal political journey as a member of the opposition.

So I do not propose to make this closing statement an extended closing statement, but there were some issues raised that I believe merit a focused response. The representative of the opposition that led off this side of the discourse on this issue raised some issues about the collection of waste once events are concluded at certain locations. And I would wish to advise that Honourable Member that one of the reasons why we encounter that situation sometimes is because the persons who host or sponsor these events do not do their part of the arrangement, which is to ensure that when they have

completed the events they gather their waste and bag their waste and put it in the appropriate receptacles so that waste can be moved by the SSA, which is a different agency, because the NCC does not collect waste.

I should like to say, however, that we are moving to a position now where we want to outfit the NCC with at least two waste collection vehicles so that they can remove some of this waste from their properties once that has been done, and we are going to enhance the placement of bins on these properties because we understand the link between health and our properties as a Commission. And we understand, Mr. Speaker, that we have to do whatever is needed and necessary to ensure that those persons who access these facilities do so in a context where their health is not threatened or where their ability to enjoy these premises is not hampered in any way, shape or form. So we have taken note of that. We intend to ensure that is done. And of course, the Sanitation Services Authority works hand in hand with the NCC to ensure that wherever assistance is needed to obviate those problems, that the Commission and the Authority work together to ensure that happens.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East raised the issue about marketing, and there is merit to that. I really believe that the Commission has such a great product that it will have to look to do more to make sure that its message gets out there on a consistent basis. And I have no difficulty with that recommendation. And certainly I am sure that the members of both the board and management - and I am sure staff - have followed this debate today and that will be something that the board will pick up and follow up on.

I am not going to spend too much time responding to the member for St. James North. I think we have all come to a position where we can expect - and I really have to express my disappointment in the member for the City who has the responsibility for trying to tame him, and he is not succeeding at that at all. Perhaps he might need to change seats with a member of St. Michael East. I know of his capacity to tame wild things, and therefore I think you may have to switch him over there.

But seriously, let me say this: there is one thing in trying to advocate or advance a view with passion, but one thing that we must not do as servants of the public is to deliberately set false impressions out there. Nobody on this side, Mr. Speaker, sir, rejoices or has rejoiced in the fact that members of staff of the public service in any domain have had to lose their jobs. It was for me personally, and I am sure for everybody that is involved, a most painful realisation that people would have had to lose their jobs for whatever reason. And I want to put it on record today that this Government was pained over the fact that that decision had to be taken. But it is my view that it is more

detrimental to the psyche of an individual to have them working and not being able to realise their salary. And therefore, I believe that as unfortunate as that particular direction may have been, it was something necessary that we had to do. But better days are coming, and there is a time and a season for everything under the sun. And I believe that as we go forward in recovering the economy of this country, that the time will come when those persons who need help will get the help that they need.

I am not going to get into the tribunal matter. I have heard a call for an update. That is not my domain, and the matter is with the tribunal. I am quite sure that they will continue their work and when they are finished, that they will hand down a decision. And whatever decision they hand down, I am quite sure all who are involved will be willing to accept. I have said from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, sir, that I am not going to get involved in any discussion related to that issue while it is being handled by the tribunal. When it is over and I choose to say anything, I will have my say at that point in time.

The Honourable Member for St. James Central also made another very salient point in his presentation when he talked about the vulnerability of small island developing States and the importance for agencies like the National Conservation Commission to ensure that it takes care of its responsibility in preservation, that it takes care of its responsibility in terms of mitigation and adaptation actions that it will have to take in the execution of its work. And let me say to the Honourable Member that we line up closely in that particular view. Barbados has been a shining example over the years in its advocacy around the world relative to the fact that small island developing States must be heard on issues of vulnerability and that all of the devastation that is being caused by actions taken by developed countries that are now being dumped on small island developing States - that there must come a time when those issues be answered and answered proactively.

I would like to make the point that Barbados is now in a steady conversation with the Green Climate Fund to ensure that some of the funds required to respond to some of the climate change impacts, whether they are marine-based or whether they are terrestrially based, that we are working now to put together what has been requested from the country - and that is a portfolio of projects that the Green Climate Fund is proposing to fund. And once that has been done, I am quite confident that a number of the things that the Honourable Member for St. James Central has addressed in his presentation will be addressed through some of those resources.

Let me move on quickly because the Honourable Member also raised the question on vacant lots. And again we see eye to eye on that concern. It has been the occupation of the Ministry of the Environment and other

ministries to deal with this issue of vacant lots. Last financial year, it cost the NCC hundreds of thousands of dollars to clear lots across this country that are owned by individuals who have not seen it fit to look after their own lots. We looked at attaching a cost to the land tax bill, but that presented some challenges both in law and in the collection of those resources. We wrote landowners and asked them to come and look after their lots. In my constituency, which is the constituency of Christ Church East - and that is where the Honourable Member for St. James Central happens to reside from time to time - Mr. Speaker, sir, we have travailed over the fact that there are an extraordinary number of vacant lots in Christ Church East. And from time to time I have asked the Board of Directors of the NCC and the Board of Directors of the Sanitation Service Authority to press their resources into action to clear some of those lots in other constituencies. Not only did we incur an increase in petrol costs, not only did we incur an increase in the use of the equipment, but we have also had to pay our workers overtime to ensure that those services were extended to communities.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, sir, what I like about the member's presentation - the member from St. James Central - is that he did not place the burden of taking care of those lots firstly at the doorstep of the Government. Because if you buy a lot and have enough to invest in the purchase of the lot, you should have enough to keep it clean. And that is my message. If you have land that you own, whether you live in the US or Timbuktu, you should make sure that land is taken care of. Yes, it devalues the value of the land next door. Yes, it creates opportunities for rodents and vermin to dwell. Yes, it provides opportunity for prowlers to stake out your homes and eventually break into your homes. And I speak on behalf of the members of my constituency as well as all Barbadians, middle class and otherwise, who are having problems in dealing with this menace.

Now, we have searched the law. We know that there is a Nuisance Act under the Ministry of Health. And we know that there are certain provisions in there. But I would like to announce to this country that the Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration with the Sanitation Service Authority and other agencies in the Ministry, are currently working on drafting a piece of legislation called the Solid Waste Management Act that will address that issue fairly and squarely under the law. And that is what we have to do. We are not blaming any administration, we are not blaming anybody for the conditions of these lots. What we are saying is that if you decide to invest - if you buy a lot and choose to postpone the development of that lot - that you should be charged if we are cleaning it. And before you are allowed to develop that lot, you must liquidate the debt with the agency that has collected or that has provided a service. That is my view. But this is not a kangaroo country. We have to ensure that we work within the

boundaries of the law. And we have to ensure, Mr. Speaker, sir, that what we do, we do it not to disadvantage any particular individual. So I take on board, Honourable Members, the recommendation of the member for St. James Central. And we are looking at that.

But I will also add this. There is another nuisance developing around this country with coconut vendors - coconut vendors who are plying their trade. And we have no difficulty with them plying their trade wherever they can do so. But all we are asking is that when they are finished, at the end of the day, remove the coconut shells. Because only about three weeks ago, the Sanitation Service Authority had to go to Warrens and deploy equipment to move a whole pile of shells that were down in the drains and obstructing the water from flowing in its natural course. And I know people are quick to say that you cannot be anti-vendors and you cannot be anti the small black man. We are not anti anybody. All we are saying is if you have an opportunity to ply your trade, be responsible enough to ensure that plying your trade and getting by is not creating a public nuisance. That is all I am saying. And therefore, we intend to work with the relevant authorities. We intend to work with the vendors to ensure that public nuisance is discontinued. Because if you go to Warrens now, you will see that shells have been left there so long that they are now dried up. And with the rains, they are not even splitting the shells anymore, so the shells are containing water. It is so there. It is so at Graham Hall, it is so at Chipmunk Roundabout, all over the place. All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that as Minister responsible for the environment, I believe it is my responsibility to give good advice to those persons who are engaged in that.

So the vacant lots - we will attend to that. The tipping fee was raised as an issue that has created some hardships and that perhaps may have forced persons to start doing illegal dumping. Look, illegal dumping is not the result of a fee. It is the result of bad habits, irresponsible people who do not wish to utilise the resources made available to them. But I am happy to report that the tipping fee, which is still in place, is being reviewed again, and we are hoping that we come up with a measure that is fully equitable and fully manageable by all and sundry involved. Because we believe keeping Barbados clean is a partnership between Government and residents and businesses and so on, and that all of us have to work hand in hand to ensure that works.

The final thing that I will address, Mr. Speaker, sir, was the comment on the state of the reefs in Barbados. And yes, the Coastal Zone Management Unit, in conjunction with other agencies in the Ministry of the Environment, has carried out a survey, and we have discovered that there is a tremendous amount of damage being done to reefs around the island. We have also discovered that there are multiple causes to the damage being done. Yes, there are some

human factors and we have been monitoring outfalls to ensure that the materials that are being leaked into the ocean are not materials that can cause any havoc on our systems, and that the outfalls are far enough out to sea that it would not have a negative impact on the near-shore circumstances of our oceans. But there is a lot of acidification of reefs going on. There is a lot of bleaching of reefs going on. And the scientists are of the view that some of the damage done to reefs would be a result of the climate change phenomenon. The ocean is getting warmer and we know that when that happens, it will result in detriment to our reefs. When our reefs are compromised, the Honourable Member who raised the point was right that there will be an automatic impact on wave action and the impact on our shoreline.

We acknowledge that a significant amount of our tourism and coastal assets are at risk if this issue escalates. And we understand that if it is not checked and it is not addressed, that we will lose more and more of our beaches. One of the reasons why that would be so is because the reef habitats include a number of different species of fish, one of which is responsible for the production of sand. What happens obviously is that when this threat escalates, it puts those fish to flight - they begin leaving their habitats and it causes a ripple effect on the other marine aspects. There are also issues with our reefs that would be influenced by runoff water from elevated areas, particularly those areas that have some kind of agricultural activity. And when that happens, you get problems with some of the materials used in agriculture washing down into the ocean. So we have those issues that we have to deal with. The National Conservation Commission is hard at work seeking to ensure that it gives full response to those number of issues that are important to how we move forward in that regard.

So, Mr. Speaker, sir, giving acknowledgement to the contributions of all colleagues at this time, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and the Bill was read a second time.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I beg to move that you do now leave the chair and that this House resolves itself into committee for the further consideration of this bill.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee, Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, Mr. Chairman reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the National Conservation Commission Validation of Fees Act, 2015.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a resolution to approve the borrowing by the Government of Barbados of the sum of United States dollars 170 million from the Export-Import Bank of China, to be on-lent to Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated to finance 85 per cent of the cost of the Sam Lord's Castle Hotel project to be executed by the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. We now revert to Government Business.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Leader of the House.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended until 6.30 this evening.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be suspended until 6.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members. The sitting of this House is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were in Government Business. And with that we shall resume.

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 21, sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, to move the passing of a resolution to approve the borrowing by the Government of Barbados of the sum of US\$170 million from the Export Import Bank of China, to be on-lent to the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. to finance 85 per cent of the cost of the Sam Lord's Castle Hotel project, to be executed by the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc.

ORDER NO. 21 – RESOLUTION – BORROWING OF US\$170 MILLION FROM THE EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF CHINA – SAM LORD'S CASTLE HOTEL PROJECT

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, sir. I take particular pleasure in being invited by yourself to introduce this resolution to the House of Assembly, for a number of reasons, of course. The principle among which is the conclusion of what can be considered to be the first element, or the first part, of a substantial body of work that the Government has undertaken over the last two years in delivering on its promise of ensuring that a former major contributor to the tourism product and industry and economic and social development of Barbados - that is the Sam Lord's property, or the property at Sam Lord's as a part of the tourism offerings of Barbados - be restored, restructured, reconstructed and reintroduced into the social, economic and environmental landscape of the country.

I believe it was in the very early days of this administration when we came to office. I believe at the time the late Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, was then Minister of Finance, and the Cabinet under his leadership unanimously agreed that the property at Sam Lord's - which of course had previous to that fallen into abeyance in terms of its activity as a major contributor to Barbados' tourism sector on the hotel accommodation side, a major landmark in relation to the history and historical significance of Sam Lord's as a property, not only in terms of its name and nature but of course of its historic presence in a very important part of Barbados and its contribution to the history and heritage of the country - should not be allowed to fall by the wayside, as has been the case, or as was the case, with so many other tourism-type products and heritage-type products within Barbados. And the determination of the Government then was to acquire the property, to securitise it, and of course when resources became available to reconstruct and recast it, while still maintaining as far as possible the historic nature of the property, but importantly as well to work it back in as a fundamental element and contributor to Barbados' tourism offerings and product and accommodation and to the industry in general.

We were mindful of a number of things here. We were mindful, as I said, of the role that it played in terms of the numbers of jobs it contributed to residents of St. Philip and from all across Barbados, the number of families that would have been built up, the homes and families that would have been built up from the persons who would have worked for so many years at that facility so proudly, and the contribution that they would have made to their own communities, as indeed the property would have made to

the surrounding communities which it served in the immediate environs in the location where it was.

It was equally foremost in the mind of the Government, Mr. Speaker, sir, the fact that here it was that another of the very slender group of what we like to term in the jargon, brand name properties in Barbados - and we have not had a whole lot of them around here in the tourism product of Barbados - and the ones that we did have, some of those went out of business before Sam Lord's, and not many new ones were being reintroduced. And here it was that we faced the spectre, indeed we encountered it, that yet another of our brand name properties would have fallen out of service in Barbados. That being, of course, the fact that the Sam Lord's property was at the time managed under the brand of Marriott, which of course is a world-renowned international hotels brand. And it is instrumental and instructive that apart from the Marriott at Sam Lord's and the Hilton at Needham's, there were not a whole lot of other branded properties around Barbados - properties capable of attracting the type of tourism, the type of tourists, and the type of tourism that operates really as the underbelly of an industry so vital to so many of us in terms of its contribution to GDP, to jobs, and of course to the general well-being of the country.

It was equally foremost in the mind of the Government that as we came into office and collided with the worst recession known since the Great Depression to the global community and to all others who were so enjoined through the process of globalisation into that global economy, that it would have been and is and will be in the best interest of Barbados - not only our tourism industry but our economy in general - to not let pass the opportunity, if it ever arose, where the conditions were conducive. That is, the concept, the finance and the political will to implement a project to restart the Sam Lord's facility, much better than it was previously, that we should not let that opportunity pass if those conditions were presented.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I am delighted to indicate to the House and of course to all Barbadians that indeed those conditions have in fact presented themselves, and that this Government has seized upon those conditions - even almost with avaricious excitement - to ensure that we don't let pass that opportunity to be able to ensure that once again we can contribute significantly to the development of Barbados. And let me go through those conditions very briefly, Mr. Speaker, sir.

We've had a very, very hard time from this global recession because of its impact on our tourism sector. As you know, we as a tourism destination rely very heavily on traditional source markets. In fact, some have said that we rely a bit too much on certain markets as a country over the years. It is, I believe, to the everlasting credit of the

Minister of Tourism that he has been steadfast in his ambition, his dream and his commitment by way of action to ensure that Barbados' tourism product be diversified to the extent where we can not only diversify it but differentiate it to the extent where we could balance our reliance on particular markets within the global tourism business, so as to reduce our dependency on any particular markets. But the reality is that even those efforts that the Honourable Member is making to differentiate existing traditional markets and to diversify into other markets - particularly into Latin America, through Brazil, Panama and other areas - the fundamental basis and structure of Barbados' tourism product means that up front we are integrally connected to the major source markets of the UK, some extension of continental Europe, the United States of America, Canada, and of course our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean region. That is the nature of our tourism. And whenever there is a fundamental disruption in the ability of those markets to send us tourists in the numbers that we would prefer, and with the resources to spend - that is, to contribute to the value added from tourism in our economy - it is more likely than not that our industry is going to suffer contraction, is going to suffer some upheaval, and of course have declines.

We endured, Mr. Speaker, sir, as we have for many years since the global recession, the harassment of many, including our colleagues in the opposition, about the policies that we have been implementing to ensure a turnaround in tourism. Now, I am not going to speak too extensively or exhaustively on that because the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, the Honourable Minister of Tourism, is far more competent to speak on those matters, and I would not try - as ineloquent as I might try - to steal his thunder on this good evening. However, I would say this: that to his credit, he has stuck with a proven policy of restructuring our tourism product, both the marketing and product end, smoothly done as it has been; stuck to a strategy of diversifying our markets and differentiating existing markets; stuck to a strategy of ensuring that we can attract brands to the island to, as I said, build and strengthen that underbelly of the tourism product. Because we know that we do very well at the upper end of the market - we are extremely competitive there. We know that at the lower end of the market we do our best and are able, through the small and intimate properties, to make our contribution. But we know that in the middle, over the years, Barbados has suffered significant losses. And if you look at the string of properties that have gone out of business, you will understand what I mean. In fact, somewhere I read - and I speak subject to correction - but I believe I read that we went from as high as 6 000, I believe 6 600 rooms, down to about 4 000 to 5 000 rooms. So we lost a considerable amount of accommodation value over the years. And that is what we were confronted with when we came into office,

and of course since then because of the impact of the global recession.

So the Minister and his team have stuck to those fundamental parts of the Government's overall strategy: improving our competitiveness, enhancing the product offering, diversifying and differentiating the markets, and of course ultimately, because of all of those things, increasing the airlift so that we are able to benefit to the extent that this year we expect - we always expected it, it may have come a year later than we anticipated or predicted, never too late but a year later than we anticipated - but we are now at the point where Barbados' tourism is growing at an annualised rate of about 15 per cent. 15 per cent for this year. A remarkable achievement given the very difficult conditions which we have been able to overcome and have had to deal with over the years. And the Minister should be congratulated for that. Not only has the strategy seen an improvement in the numbers of persons coming, but we confidently expect from the figures we already have, which could only get better, that at the least Barbados will end this year with a tourism value added increase of over 5 per cent. And that, Mr. Speaker, sir - 15 per cent increase, 5 per cent increase in tourism value added - are exceedingly good figures. And I dare say the Minister will tell you that the players in the industry are saying that they expect this coming winter is going to be even better than the last one. So next year should be just as good or better than what we have experienced already.

So behind the context of an appropriately designed, expertly implemented and properly designated tourism strategy for Barbados, we then sought to identify where we can find the opportunity to identify the appropriate level of financing. Because, Mr. Speaker, sir, it is important to follow the course. We first had to fix some things in tourism on all ends - service, product, marketing, ministers, all of those things. We then had to look, because we are not going to rush and build a hotel and not have anything to support it. This has to go through a course. People say, oh, it takes so long and you promise this thing is going to happen every day. But the stars had to line up, and once we had gotten that particular part of the strategy on the way and well producing, we then started to look for the opportunity to find appropriate financing.

And I say appropriate financing, sir. I mean financing that makes sense in the context of the current financial challenges which Barbados is confronting. Everybody knows our debt to GDP ratio is above 100 per cent - too high. Everybody knows that we have unfortunately lost our investment grade status because of the impact of the global recession. Everybody knows that we are implementing a fiscal consolidation policy which has called for stringent policies to be put in place to get our debt stabilised and then get it on a downward trajectory, and of course ensure that we improve Government's public

finances. So in the context of that, when we started to look around at the potential sources for financing of a project of this magnitude, we had to identify - again as part of the Government's financial strategy - sources of revenue that would come at rates that the Government could afford and with conditions that made it eminently comfortable for the Government to undertake such a project and execute it successfully, both in the element of the project itself but of course in servicing the facility which we wanted to engage.

And so we had a number of people who came to us with proposals on potential financing for the Sam Lord's reconstruction project. And some of them were reasonably good, some were not so good at all. But the vast majority, with the exception of one, were not financing options that the Government of Barbados, given our situation and given what we wanted to do, could easily or advisedly or wisely engage. So we looked towards one of our greatest and most fundamental partners in development for the past - oh, since the 1970s, since 1977, if my memory serves me correctly - we looked towards the People's Republic of China.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, sir, we have had long diplomatic and development relations with China that have redounded to the benefit of many Barbadians, as it has of course on the other side to the benefit of the people of China. And the Chinese Government, through its various agencies and teams, have - particularly in the last 10 years, and of course as I said our relationship goes back way beyond that - people know of many of the grand projects we have done: the gymnasium at Wildey, the Fairchild Street Market in Bridgetown, the expansion to the Community College on the Mornings. We have done a number of grant facilities with the Chinese Government and its people. But particularly in the last 10 years - and you know there is always a saying that you know who your friends are in times of difficulties, not just when times are good but when times are challenging, that is when we separate the sheep from the goat - the Government of China, in a very enlightened policy, has been making available to developing countries all across the world, and certainly we can speak specifically to here in the Caribbean, opportunities to access reasonable-cost financing for major infrastructural projects that contribute to the economic, social, environmental and other development variables of many of our Caribbean territories.

These have been expressed in various programmes, both in relation to us in Government and also when the opposition was in Government as well. In fact, I know that the Leader of the Opposition herself led a delegation and signed, on behalf of the last administration, cooperation agreements between the Government of Barbados and the People's Republic of China for Barbados to access resources on the various facilities. Since then, the

Government of China has expanded those agreements - cooperation agreements - to its various financial institutions, the Ex-Im Bank, the China Development Bank and so forth and so on, and has opened up a new window for financial and economic development for Barbados and many other countries in the Caribbean. Indeed, I could even go further to say that in recent times they have gone even beyond that - the Government of China, that is - to create a new infrastructure bank that is going to work with developing countries across the world to help them improve their infrastructure for major infrastructural development projects, as a great contribution to the development of countries such as Barbados. So this progression in terms of the Government of China's contribution to the stability, the economic stability, the financial stability and the economic revival of many countries in the developing world continues, whether it is in Africa, in Latin America, of course in parts of Asia, and of course right here in the Caribbean region as well.

So we approached the Government of China with the possibility of engaging a facility under one of the many schemes of financing opportunities that they have, to see whether or not there was both the interest, appetite and conditions for a reasonably priced loan for Barbados to execute a project of this magnitude. When I say magnitude - you know the project is collectively \$200 million. The loan which we are doing here today is \$170 million, 85 per cent of the total cost. But you are talking about US\$170 million, which is a substantial investment. Indeed it is one of the biggest investments financially in a tourism-related project in Barbados - not in Barbados, in Barbados' history. And I will come to a bit of that very shortly.

So the conditions for financing that were presented, once the Chinese Government and its agencies and teams expressed an interest in working with us on this - and of course I must say they were not at all hesitant to do it, indeed they were quite excited about the project - was that we could do a loan of this magnitude with a nominal interest rate, a coupon of 2.5 per cent. 2.5 per cent interest. Mr. Speaker, sir, under even normal conditions - yes, under even normal conditions, Mr. Speaker, sir, when times are good, even in the 14 years when the Barbados Labour Party was in office and they benefited from the boom in the global economy - not even then. There are very few funders in the world, other than the institutional people of the IDB, the World Bank - not the IMF, they do a different type of funding - but the IDB, CDB and so forth. Very few funders in the world would lend a developing country the size of Barbados, and with the issues that Barbados may have, financing at a fixed rate of 2.5 per cent. And with the conditions which I should shortly read out in terms of the loan.

So part one, Mr. Speaker, sir: the tourism strategy, the restructuring of the entities, the reshaping of our

marketing, the upgrade of our product, the increase in airlift - Strategy 1, taken care of and on the way. The opportunity, or condition, as to the availability of the financing at prices or costs that is eminently achievable in terms of the servicing of the loan for Barbados - correct. And then, Mr. Speaker, sir, finally, to identify the company that will be responsible for the construction of that facility at Sam Lord's - another one of the conditions that we had set ourselves. Would we be able to attract a firm competent and capable to implement this type of project at \$200 million - a 450-odd room facility, US\$200 million, US\$400 million Barbados dollars, 450 rooms of modern-day, state-of-the-art tourism accommodation?

You really can't answer much better than that. And the ideal firm presented itself in the corporate body of the compliant cooperation of China. Mr. Speaker, sir, all of the conditions that we would have set ourselves would have been met. And therefore the Government, seeing those opportunities, setting those conditions, and mindful of our earlier mandate not to let past that opportunity, if it presented itself, seized upon this, these set of conditions, conducive as they are for the negotiation and final completion of a loan agreement with the Ex-Im Bank of China as an agency of the Government of China, and to come here to this House of Assembly to present and ask for the approbation and approval of the House of this loan.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, sir, along the way, both when I was Minister responsible for the executing agency - in this case, the Barbados Tourism Investment, Inc., which we, of course, have ultimate confidence in, an agency created under the last administration, which has been responsible for numerous projects across Barbados and in whose management I have the utmost confidence, as does the Cabinet of Barbados - that I must say, when I had responsibility for it, and still as it is now under the Hon. Minister for Tourism, as part of our restructuring process, and we brought all those tourism entities back on the one roof for efficient administration and execution of our work, I must say that it was for me a personal delight to have participated in some small way, Mr. Speaker, sir, in the talks and in negotiations really taking place between the technical people. But at my level, the talks, the meetings, the exchange of ideas and views with the representatives, both of Compla and of course of the representatives of the Ex-Im and at the government level, in terms of our own diplomatic engagement with the Ambassador, Her Excellency the Ambassador of China, in the execution of our responsibilities as the Chinese government representative, it was a delight for me.

I know the Minister of Tourism can speak for his own self in regard to this, but I can say from my own end, personally, both from that end when I had responsibility for BTI, but now as Minister of Finance proper, in relation to being the ministry that is responsible under the agreement

for the financial part of this facility, to say that it was really - I mean, if all of our engagements and negotiations were like this, it really would be a joy to do this. And we really found - you know, people say all kinds of things - but we found that the Government, the representatives from the various agencies of China, were so accommodating, so understanding as to our issues, as to our concerns, as to our conceptualisations of how this project should unfold and be executed, and sought at every term possible within the context of their own laws and their own conventions and our own laws and conventions to be as accommodating as could be humanly possible in the circumstances.

And so very, very early in the financial negotiations we were able to come to conclusions and agreements very, very early. The process of course takes a little while because we have a lot of legal matters to go through, a lot of rules to ensure on both sides - financial and other rules, legal rules that we have to go through. But ostensibly the basic term sheet of this loan was very quickly negotiated and agreed. And when one looks at the conditions, which I should now go through specifically, one would see exactly why it has been so and to the eternal benefit of the people of Barbados in terms of the quality of the facility which we have gotten here today.

And therefore I want to publicly take this opportunity on behalf of the Ministry of Finance to express our sincere gratitude to the People's Republic of China and their Government and of course all those agencies, state agencies and others who would have participated in this exercise. And of course to the management, the executive management and representatives of the Compla company.

Mr. Speaker, sir, the terms and conditions of the term sheet of this loan can be read as follows. The agreement is being done under a Preferential Buyer Credit Loan Agreement. Of course, the borrower is the Government of Barbados. The lender is the Export-Import Bank of China. The amount - up to US \$170 million. The facility of course is Preferential Buyers Credit. The purpose is to finance 85 per cent of the cost of executing a commercial contract entered into by the Barbados Tourism Investment, Inc. - BTI, as we call it, hereinafter referred to as the end user - and the China National Complete Plant Import and Export Cooperation Limited, hereinafter referred to as the Chinese Contractor, on November 13, 2014 for the execution of the Sam Lord's Project. The tenure is for 20 years and the repayment terms include a moratorium period of 60 months - that is five years. Mr. Speaker, US \$170 million with a moratorium period of five years - I will take that any day of the week. Thereafter, principal is repaid in 31 equal payments over a period of 180 months at a fixed interest rate of 2.5 per cent per annum. Interest of course being paid semi-annually in arrears, calculated on the basis of the actual number of days elapsed and a 360-day year, a small commitment fee of

0.25 per cent payable semi-annually, and an annual management fee of 0.25 per cent or US \$425 000 due 30 days after the contract becomes effective.

Mr. Speaker, sir, the term sheet that I have just read, in the context of what we understand today to be a very hostile and aggressive financial market, is what we can say conservatively a superior term sheet for a loan. Absolutely superior. And it is in keeping with Government strategy, as I said, to ensure that we attract financing for major projects that do not put an additional or extraordinary burden on the Government's public finances to service the loans, even as we expect in a project like this to be able to get substantial returns from the operation of the hotel to service that facility. But just say that was not possible - and we expect it to be eminently possible with this particular project - this is an economic project. It has its fundamental basis in the numbers. The Minister will speak more specifically to those in terms of the returns of the project. But just in case the project did not pan out, the Government of Barbados could easily service this loan without any particular problems whatsoever. And that I think is a fundamental point on which we should all celebrate.

So the conditions are there in terms of this facility. It is one that I, as Minister of Finance, and that any Barbadian could commend at any time and any place in relation to what we know is the Government strategy in terms of dealing with issues of this nature. From the financing, from the economic end - and again, the Minister will speak to some of this - but from the economic end, in one of our major sectors of tourism, to come back in with 450 high-level, top-quality, solid tourism rooms where we have been saying that we need to get back into good quality rooms, to come back into that with this level of investment is absolutely remarkable. To the extent where our expectation in any given year, once this hotel property stabilises, is to be able to get an annual return of US \$119 million in terms of the gross returns and a net return of about US \$35 million per year.

Yes, when you take out the leakage that will naturally flow back out of the country, we are talking about an even better scenario than we had when we signed the deal for the reconstruction of the Hilton Hotel. And I must say, I must congratulate the Minister - and I can take a little credit for it too - that over the last five or six years we have been able to elevate the performance of the Hilton at Needhams Point to the extent where it is now delivering, it is now making profit, having contributed fully to the owner's return on value in the most difficult period of tourism. It is not just the doing over - it is the running and management of it that we have upgraded substantially. Because when we came to office it was not performing precisely as it should, and we restructured the entire financial book of the hotel, we upgraded its marketing working with Hilton International Properties, restructured

its balance sheet, and it is now performing at an exceedingly high level, getting not only the owner's return on value but surpassing the owner's return on value and giving a small profit to the Government of Barbados.

In fact, the Minister can tell you as well that it is now undergoing a major upgrade - it is in phase one of the upgrade of its rooms, and phase two will start as soon as phase one is completed sometime in the next few weeks. So we know, Mr. Speaker, sir, what is required to make these properties work and be profitable and how to stabilise them financially in the shortest possible time. Because it usually takes a major property of this nature between 5 and 10 years to stabilise. The projection for the Hilton was that we would have stabilised it in 12 years. This Government achieved that in eight - we turned that around and speeded that up. We believe we can stabilise this property in just as quick a time or even shorter, and be able to contribute to its development where it can contribute gross in excess of US \$119 million to the treasury, to the economy of Barbados, and when we take out whatever leakage, a net value of about US \$35 million per year. That is significant.

But one of the other things that we have done, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that we are so confident about the performance of this property once it is finished that we have agreed in this loan agreement to create a special escrow account into which the profits and returns of this property can go to directly service the loan, so that it does not have to be either totally or otherwise a burden on the direct public purse up front. In other words, the Government of Barbados, as the principal signatory to the loan, will stand just behind the BTI and the company and the mechanism which they will put in place to ensure the servicing of this loan. Mindful as we are that of course it is a government-to-government concessionary loan, but mindful as we are and confident as we will be in the performance of the company, that we can agree up front to the creation of an account into which the resources will go to service this loan - that is how confident we are of this project.

And why are we so confident, sir? We are so confident because even before a block has been laid - and I show how our confidence in this project has been drawn up - even before a block has been laid, even before a hard hat has gone on to the site, we pitched this and the numbers behind this to a wide international community of tourism property managers. And Mr. Speaker, sir, I can say without fear of contradiction, the response was absolutely remarkable, to the extent where we had a buffet of choices and we settled - as the Minister will say in his speech - we settled, if you could call it that, on the Wyndham Corporation, one of the world's foremost and most successful tourism property managers. And they came on and signed with us even before we were able to dig a hole. So when you are talking about tourism property managers -

Hilton, Sheraton, Four Seasons, Wyndham, Starwood Properties - that type of thing, when you are talking about attracting that type of hotel management for a property of this nature, when they looked at the figures that were independently generated, they automatically said, this is something that we can do. And so, Mr. Speaker, sir, we were able to sign them on in the confidence that we were able to produce this result.

So, as I said, I do not want to steal the thunder of the Honourable Minister. But I really felt that we should make these particular points in relation to this loan and to show how important it is. Mr. Speaker, sir, even though we want to do - you know, we live in an instantaneous society, we live in an instant coffee society. Everything must be done now, everything must happen now. And if the Government announces something that it wants to do, something next week, they want to see tractors on the site and all of that. We understand the nature of the society that we live in, but we also understand that the nature of government cannot be of a barbecue pigtail nature. It has to be that we think out, that we design, that we negotiate, and that we ultimately implement policies and initiatives that have benefited from the wisdom of time.

And truth be told, we could have accepted a much worse financial agreement. We could have hustled on to the site and started building a second-rate property just to come into Parliament or to go to some part of Barbados and say, oh, we started and we have 800 people on the site working, or a thousand jobs on the site working, but then end up at the end of that exercise with something that nobody is particularly happy about. And we have taken our time with this, Mr. Speaker, sir, as we have taken our time with other things. We have been harassed and abused about it. But we know that when the ground is broken on this project next week, that when tonight - if it is the favour of the Parliament - this resolution is passed, we hold to our bosom, we train to our minds and we let speak from our lips that this is a fundamentally good agreement for the redevelopment, reconstruction and reintroduction of Sam Lord's at the highest possible level in the context of this type of tourism offering into the industry of Barbados for the eternal benefit of all Barbadians. And that is effective government at work. Not government that is turning against itself, not government that is trying to denude anybody or stop people from doing what they have to do, but government that is working in the interests of the people of Barbados. While others are on a frolic, we are on fundamental work and we will continue to do so.

This is only the start, Mr. Speaker, sir, of what is to come later this week, into next week and thereafter, in the weeks to come and in the months to come. And so, Mr. Speaker, sir, it is with pride in the work of my colleagues, in the patience and understanding which they have exhibited and the wisdom which they have exhibited in

working with this, it is also with pride, as I said, in the contribution and work of the People's Republic of China and their representatives, and of course those from the Compla Corporation and the Ex-Im Bank and from the domestic diplomatic representative here of the Government of China, that I express on behalf of the Ministry of Finance again our gratitude for their steadfast, accommodating nature in the execution of this particular negotiation, to the extent where we can come here to the people of Barbados and present this all-encompassing and eternally useful agreement to the public of Barbados and through their representatives here in the House of Assembly.

And so, Mr. Speaker, sir, without detaining the House any longer from my end, I beg to move that this resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to not only support the Government in relation to this particular loan which comes before the Chamber, but I want to begin on the note on which the last speaker would have ended in certainly thanking the People's Republic of China and also the Export Import Bank of China for agreeing to enter into this arrangement with the Barbados Government. I do so genuinely, Mr. Speaker, because I, like most Barbadians, want the best for this island of ours. I, like most Barbadians, am well aware of the long-standing relationship which the Barbados Labour Party would have had with the People's Republic of China, and certainly the number of projects which, through the foresight of both Governments, would have come to fruition over the course of the past few years - to name a few, it would obviously be the market in Cheapside and certainly the gymnasium, the Garfield Sobers Complex. And this certainly is the first, I believe, in a long time, particularly under this administration, that we are seeing a project come to fruition with the People's Republic of China.

I say that, sir, because we have had a number of situations where the Minister of Finance and others on the other side have pronounced on several occasions that there was going to be assistance coming from the People's Republic of China in the form of low-cost financing to assist the Barbados Government in coming out of this current economic crisis. A number of those projects, Mr. Speaker, were never able to materialise. I believe there was supposed to be a project with respect to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West's constituency, where a multipurpose facility was supposed to be built down Brandon's. And that did not come to fruition. And I am sure there were others - where Silver Sands Resort was supposed to also have low-cost financing associated with it. And so it does please me, and I am sure members on this

side, to see that a project is actually getting off the ground, given the relationship that we have had with this country and the people of China, even if it has taken almost eight years to come to fruition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Honourable Minister of Finance and I know that at every occasion he wanted to pat himself on the back for the sterling work that he believes, no doubt, that he has been doing. And in fairness to him, if nobody else is going to pat you on the back, I suppose you have to pat yourself on the back. But Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is that we heard much said about this growth path, the path on which we are going to recovery, that this project appears to be one which was always in the thinking and the mind of the Democratic Labour Party and of this administration. And they are somehow to be applauded for this particular project at this point and juncture in our financial situation.

Back in 2008, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would have indicated, while speaking about the tourism sector, that the Banyan Tree development was scheduled to commence at the former Sam Lord's Castle. So back in 2008, we had pronouncements being made by the current administration as to what was going to happen with the property. We know that property has been tied up in the issues with the CLECO debacle and therefore it has taken quite a while for certain things to allow the Government to move forward. Pronouncements were then made in relation to this

particular project. And initially there was talk about the project being for, I believe, low-income housing. There were different plans that were put forward for the very site. Well, those on the other side are free, Mr. Speaker, to rebut what I am saying. I am saying what was put in the public domain. That has changed over time, Mr. Speaker, and we are now hearing of a project that is at a cost of \$200 million on the 58-acre site on which Sam Lord's Castle is housed. We were told by the Member for St. Michael South Central that this project was to start in mid-2015. We were told that it was supposed to take 30 months to complete. Mid-2015 came and went and the project did not start. There are several projects that this administration have said they are breaking ground, the land is cleared, and then nothing happens.

Mr. Speaker, again I reiterate that I am pleased that this particular agreement - this loan - is coming before this House. But I too will wait, like others, to see that this project actually materialises. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that I note that the Honourable Member who spoke before me did not address where the additional US\$30 million would be coming from, because it is only \$170 million that is actually being borrowed in relation to this particular loan that is before us. I ask that, Mr. Speaker, because when you look at page four of the document, you will see that one of

the conditions for the first disbursement of funds speaks to the fact that documents evidencing that the end user has paid to the Chinese contractor the proportional counterpart fund in accordance with the agreement is one of the preconditions to the first disbursement of financing. And that is a condition precedent A of paragraph 5. It is also, sir, a condition precedent as it relates to the subsequent disbursements in relation to this loan, and that appears at condition precedent B of, sir, paragraph two - that the documents evidencing that the end user has paid to the Chinese contractor the proportional counterpart fund in accordance with the agreement is also supplied.

So, sir, no difficulty with the Government of Barbados entering into this agreement. But I do believe, with all that we know about the current fiscal conditions of this country, that it would be in the best interest of the Government of Barbados to indicate what steps are being taken to obtain the additional financing to be able to complete this project. And the Minister has been silent on this in his presentation. Again, I know that the practice is developing in this Chamber where the less said in the introduction the better - wait to see what the Opposition has to say, and then in the wrap-up come with all the information, curse every member on the Barbados Labour Party Opposition, and present the information thereafter, or something resembling the information that has been requested.

But I, sir, simply ask on behalf of the people of this country that the Honourable Minister indicate to this Chamber where the remaining US\$30 million is to come from in relation to the financing for this project. Mr. Speaker, it is important that we understand it. We would know it would not have been in the Estimates. And it is important for us to be able to appreciate where the financing is coming from. It would also be interesting to hear when the financing will actually become available - in other words, when are all of the conditions which have been attached to the loan intended to be fulfilled? Because if it is that 30 months is the estimated timeline - if that is still the case, and members on the other side will be able to clarify if that is still the case.

Forward the explanation that the reason why only 40 per cent of the workforce that it intends to - that is intended to be engaged by this project - will be Barbadians. Now, I accept that there will be technical persons who will have to be engaged, perhaps by the Chinese who will have to come to Barbados for this project. But I do wish, sir, that some consideration, even if at this late stage, sir, because you see the people in the City, the people in St. James Central, the people in St. Thomas and the people in St. Michael South East are - several of them are unemployed. And several of them get excited when they hear pronouncements by this Government that a thousand jobs are going to be created. And there are certain expectations, legitimate expectations

that Barbadians have, that while this Government is setting about to find solutions to the mess that they have created, that at the same time, when you are making cuts in expenditure, laying off people, cutting the subsidies and the transfers to various institutions, that you would, at the same time, sir, ensure that a large percentage, if not all, of the Barbadian labourers in this country, the artisans and such, would be engaged on a project such as this.

They have been holding strain, sir, because this administration has begged them to hold strain so that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. But I do believe, and it is no disrespect to the People's Republic of China, it is simply a question to this administration to answer the questions put forward, no doubt, by the people of this country who have an expectation that they would be the first priority in terms of employment in relation to a project such as this. If it is that the people who live in St. Michael North West right now will get employment, or the people in St. Michael South Central are going to get employment, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the ones on this side that we represent are asking, where are the jobs for them?

Because we are hearing - we are in a situation, Mr. Speaker, in this country where when the Barbados Labour Party left office in 2008, unemployment was below 6 per cent. We find ourselves now in a situation, sir, where those statistics have doubled. And that is the statistics I am using by the Central Bank - the Central Bank of Barbados - because I know we believe on this side that the statistics are higher. If it is that those in the constituencies on the other side are getting the work, the ones over here are not getting it. And I know that is not the case, because no matter if I go in each of the constituencies of the Members on the other side, the same cries are being belted out by persons in this country that they cannot get work.

I am happy to hear that construction can happen in this country again. Because construction is not just for the labourers who are going to work on this site, sir. It is all of the other ancillary services that benefit from the labour force that, as far as I am concerned, we have to also look out for. But I do believe that Members can make their comments on the other side. But I do believe that your constituents will ask you as well, how is it that we have entered into an arrangement like this where the reason given is that it is because of deadlines having to be met. The Senator, Irene Sandiford Garner, gave the explanation, sir. And I understand sometimes, because I was totally blown away when I saw the comments that were made. Because I remember when the acquisition for this land came to this Chamber and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke in this House - to the best of my knowledge, he did not address the issue of the employment of the persons on this site. So those comments no doubt came subsequently, perhaps in the other place.

But I know that it would have been an issue that would have been raised by Members on this side.

Certainly, because of the current state of the Barbadian people, we have no problem allowing persons to work who are not from Barbados. But there is a reality that Barbadians are hurting. And even if you said 10 per cent of the workforce was going to be from outside, I don't think Barbadians would be bothered too much. But I asked you if a 60 per cent to the Chinese and a 40 per cent to the Barbadian workers is really a satisfactory negotiation given the current economic conditions. Because, Mr. Speaker, you know, when you ask people to come into your confidence in the hope that things are going to turn around, they have certain expectations that when projects of this nature are negotiated that they are going to be the beneficiaries of such projects. And if it is that you are going to tell persons in the Barbadian labour force that they will not benefit from this project until 30 months down the line when the project is completed, where the rewards start to come and then the persons in the surrounding area can benefit, I say to you, think again.

Because the demands right now which are causing a lot of the problems in this country in relation to even crime, as a result of the rising unemployment in this country - that is a reality. And if it is that the Attorney General is so concerned about crime, we on this side are so concerned about crime. I would think that given the fact that we have persons who no doubt can ably do the job in this country, that they would certainly be given the first looking. Particularly for an administration that says it is for the small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly for the people - the Government who says that it is for the poor people. Well, the poor people are suffering. And a 60/40 split does not speak to the fact that a Government is caring, that a Government is understanding the social conditions that exist across this country. That doesn't speak to that.

And so I say if there is a different explanation, I would urge Members on the other side before the close of this debate to explain what the reason is. I understand that our back is against the wall. As a country, in a sense, we have to take what we get. The governing laws in this agreement is China. We understand that the conditions that have been set are based on the things that the Government has to provide. Otherwise it will not get the first disbursement or it will not get subsequent disbursements. We understand that your back is against the wall. But I say to you, explain to us why it is that something like that is so fundamental to the people of this country in terms of work at a point where the cost of living is rising, people are living from paycheque to paycheque or in some cases have no paycheques. How it is that the Government of Barbados could negotiate something like this? If this was a deal breaker, then I say to this administration it was the wrong deal to make. Perhaps a better negotiation could come.

Mr. Speaker, again, I support the principle of the People's Republic of China working with the Barbados Government and that finally this administration can actually say that the project is getting off the ground. Don't get me wrong. What I cannot support is that when your back is against the wall, that all of a sudden you can sign over everything to whoever simply to be able to say that projects are getting off the ground. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I shall move on.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, that I would want to make is that I have some concerns regarding the statistics that have been touted by this administration in relation to the performance of the tourism sector. Much reliance is being placed on arrivals, sir. And I know that this administration knows better because when we were the Government of this country, many times the position was taken that it is not necessarily the arrival numbers that you look at, but you also look at the tourism spend. How much are the visitors actually spending when they come to the island?

Again, my concerns are primarily in relation to the statistics being touted by this administration. When we were in office, as I said, concern was expressed in relation to a reliance on numbers. We were told that we had to look at revenue generated because we could have all the tourists coming to Barbados. How we make money is when the tourists who come to this island spend money. And therefore, sir, I don't believe that the rules have changed. I believe that if we are now being asked to rely on statistics coming from the Central Bank of Barbados - because I really don't know where else they may be coming from right now - because we are obviously seeing a reliance on statistics for the first quarter, which is where the measurements are now coming from, instead of winter being broken down and also summer. And the statistics seem not to be as readily available as they used to be. Certainly we have to rely on the Central Bank Governor to provide the statements of what is happening in tourism in the various press releases.

And sir, if you take the last Central Bank press release for September 2015, which I believe is already a document of the House, you will see, sir, at Table 3 of Page 8, in relation to the balance of payments. In 2007, before the Barbados Labour Party left office, we were recording \$2.3 billion in travel. In 2008, the figures were still \$2.3 billion. In 2009, we started to record declines of \$2.14 billion. 2010, \$2.0 billion. 2011, further declined to \$1.9 billion. 2012, \$1.8 billion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2013 we saw an increase of about 5 per cent up to \$1.9 billion. And then we have seen a further decline for 2014 down to \$1.8 billion. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are constantly being told that numbers are up. This administration speaks to the fact that

arrivals are up. There is an increase in arrivals - I believe the long-stay arrivals of 54 000 from last year between January 1st and September 30th. I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, the figures in relation to what we are earning is not corresponding with the arrivals that this administration is saying that it is having. A number of hotels have been closed. The hoteliers, when you ask them, are not reflecting the income generated from the figures that have been touted. That is the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I say that these figures reflect a situation where we should be at over \$3 billion in 2015 if we were on the trajectory that we should have been on. But instead, the Honourable Minister and Member for St. Michael South Central has presided over declines in tourism year after year, and has been rewarded with the title of continuing to be the Minister of Tourism, having been aware that really there is so much work that needed to be done to have taken these figures to a different level.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, a number of things have happened in tourism that should not have happened. And those on the other side know this administration did not spend the marketing money that it should have done at the time when it was supposed to - on your own admission, because Government didn't have the money. Madam Deputy Speaker, then they came in 2013 and told us about the Ten Point Plan. We have heard nothing further about that either, Madam Deputy Speaker. They came the next month and they told us that there was going to be an injection of marketing and promotion money through an IADB policy-based loan of \$50 million, of which US\$13 million was to be injected to pay off creditors that Barbados had owed to the rest of the world. We have heard nothing further, Madam Deputy Speaker, in relation to these matters.

We have not heard whether hoteliers have taken advantage of the hotel refurbishment fund. We know that there are some that are doing renovations. But when we look at the numbers in terms of persons who have taken advantage of it, I asked this Chamber, I asked those on the other side - have we seen the investment by the hoteliers who, on the admission of the banks, are some of the largest creditors in this country? They are the largest defaulters of loans in this country. And have we therefore seen the interest from the hoteliers in being able to renovate their properties, to refurbish their properties as this administration would have wanted? It is okay to talk about Sam Lord's, but we have to ask ourselves whether the rest of the industry is actually performing as this administration would want to see. Because these are serious questions that have to be asked if we are to have the confidence that the tourism sector is going to be at the vanguard of being able to take this country out of the current economic crisis that it finds itself in. But we hear nothing from the other side in relation to this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are events that this administration said they were going to have over the course from 2013. Several of them have not materialised. I believe there was some music and arts festival that has not materialised. Yes, there have been sporting events which have brought persons to Barbados. But I asked you, are you where we need to be to be able to turn around the Barbados economy?

Because the other factor, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the foreign reserves, while we are being told that everything is stable, the foreign reserves are actually not doing as well as this administration would want them to do, which is consistent with the figures that we are seeing in terms of what people are spending. So on the one hand, you are saying we have all these people coming to Barbados, but the statistics on the Central Bank Governor's own report is not showing that people are either spending the money or that the money is staying in Barbados. So if you take entities, for instance, like the Sandals Resort, it is a fact that most of the money is traded overseas. It is not coming to the island. And that is a reality. So a lot of the song and dance that was made by this administration that all this money would be spent by the Sandals Resort here in Barbados - we have to accept the reality it is not being spent here.

I know that the Honourable Prime Minister knows better. It is not about not having an entity here. It is about having an entity that at the end of the day, the people of Barbados are comfortable that when they look at these statistics, we can justify that they are bringing the numbers to Barbados. That when we get the numbers, the people are spending the money that is going to be able to filter through the economy, that the jobs are being created, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that the foreign reserve position is not as suggested by the Central Bank Governor - that the usage of foreign reserves has now reverted to normal since the end of 2013.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to refer you to - and this is not the Barbados Labour Party speaking, this is the people speaking. Because sometimes this administration believes that we oppose or that we highlight things simply for the sake of highlighting it. But I do believe that we have to be concerned when we have information circulating in the public domain that suggests that Barbados is experiencing a foreign currency crunch, despite all that the Central Bank Governor has said. We have to be concerned when business people indicate that on the one hand, foreign reserves are adequate - I have not quoted as yet, I am speaking - we have to be concerned when business people in this country express concern that foreign reserves are supposed to be adequate according to the Central Bank Governor, but on the other hand, when they request nearly \$100 000 to facilitate a payment for a shipment, they are told by the bankers that the wire transfer had not been done

as yet because of an insufficiency of foreign currency. I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, all jokes aside, this is a serious thing, if it is that we are to expect that the people of this country are to appreciate that we are on the right track.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: From what I can see from where I sit, the Honourable Member is reading from a newspaper which is against the Standing Orders of this House. A newspaper clipping? Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order taken.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Madam Speaker, I have not read from any newspaper. I am glad that the Honourable Prime Minister is paying attention - to what I am saying and I hope -

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Let the Honourable Member show you what she is reading from. Let us show the Deputy Speaker where you are reading from.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe the rules of this House state that I am free to hold a paper in my hand and until I refer to that article from which I am quoting, you can only then make a ruling on whether that article can be submitted and be read into the records of this House. And up to this point, Madam Speaker, I have not read from any one.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: A member may not read his speech, but he may read extracts from books or papers other than newspapers in support of his argument.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Take it that you have ruled because I have not referred to any newspaper clipping. I have not read from the document - it is before you. Sorry, ma'am. Ma'am, I know that this is the politics of distraction. I know the Honourable Member does not wish me to speak about the foreign reserve position of this country.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order - if the Honourable Member is claiming that she is not reading from the document, we can call for the record and compare the record with what the Honourable Member said over the last few minutes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue with your presentation.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, ma'am. Ma'am, if we take a look also at the September 2015 press release from the Central Bank at Table 1 of Page 6, we will see that the foreign exchange reserves when the Barbados Labour Party left office - I have to keep making this point, Madam Deputy Speaker - stood at \$1.5 billion in 2013.

Ma'am, it had fallen to \$1.1 billion. Provisional figures now stand for up to September 2015 at \$976 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that we continue to see declines in our foreign reserve position. It is clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, that no matter how many times this current administration speaks to the fact that we have all these glowing statistics of arrivals to this country, that our tourism spend is on the decline. It is clear to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Barbados is not performing at the level to which it should. It does not matter whether those who are in high office say that the Barbados position is stable. It does not matter if they say that people will not be sent home because we do not believe them anymore. What we believe, ma'am, are the statistics. If they are put out by them, they are the statistics upon which I am going to refer to. And those statistics suggest to me that Barbados - Barbados' tourism sector in particular - is not performing despite all of the numbers and the manner in which the numbers are presented. It is not performing in the way that would be expected by this administration or even by ours.

And if the Honourable Minister of Tourism, the Member for St. Michael South Central, can stand and say otherwise, I would appreciate him saying so - that these figures reflect that the long-stay arrivals are supporting the numbers.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order to suggest that the reference to figures being fiddled with is unparliamentary and unfortunate. The statistics for tourism in this country are provided by the Barbados Statistical Service and informed by the Immigration Department. That has been the practice since before 2008. Whether the figures are up or they are down, it is wrong and unfortunate for public officers to be assaulted in here by any opposition parliamentarian simply because they do not like the idea that the numbers are, quote unquote, looking good. When the numbers were looking bad, these public servants were lauded. And now we hear they are fiddling. I do not rise to protect myself because I can deal with a little attack from out there. But it is not fair to public servants in this country - in the Barbados Statistical Service, in the Immigration Department. And I think the Member knows better or should know better. And I suggest that the unparliamentary language be withdrawn. Public officers cannot defend themselves in here, and that is fiddling with figures.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order taken. Honourable Member, I agree that it is unparliamentary for you to speak in such a manner.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: But I will, however, reiterate the point that I know the Honourable Minister cannot say that the figures which have been presented - and the figures which the Central Bank Governor suggests in

his report - are being shown for foreign reserves or even for spending, and that they reflect that the number of tourists who are coming to this country are spending the money that we would want to see spent in terms of a turnaround of the tourism sector.

So it is acceptable to focus on numbers when it is convenient to do so. But I err on the side of caution, ma'am, because you cannot take the numbers on their own. You have to look at the entire picture in order to draw a conclusion as to how the tourism sector is performing. And I know that the other side has to be uneasy about this discussion because they do not have much to really say that they are doing. So if numbers look good, that is something for them to feel good about. But we on this side understand and appreciate that numbers on their own are not enough.

And there is no attack intended on these civil servants. The statistics that we have been receiving before - they have changed. And the Honourable Minister knows that those figures have not been as

forthcoming as they once were. Perhaps that is the better language - they have not been as forthcoming as the statistics once were. The way in which they were calculated previously has not changed. The availability of the statistics is not as it used to be before. And those are the points on which members on the other side are not rising to indicate that I am incorrect. So I will move on.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I really - as the Minister responsible for the Statistical Department - I really must say that the Honourable Member is not only casting unfortunate aspersions on the public servants, but misleading the House. There has been no change in the methodology for the computation of statistics pertaining to tourism in Barbados. No ministry - the Ministry of Tourism or any other ministry - has been involved in the collection of that data, the collation of that data, or the computation of the data in any altered way. It remains as it always has been.

Tourists come through the various ports of entry. They fill out what are called ED cards. Those cards indicate their length of stay, where they are staying, and so forth and so on. And those statistics in terms of long-stay visitors are computed by the relevant division within the Statistical Service of Barbados. The tourism spend is calculated on a methodology utilising submissions made by the various entities participating in the tourism industry. Those are given again to the Statistical Service and to the Central Bank of Barbados, who then do calculations on what we call the value added or tourism spend. That has always been the basis on which it has been done. It has not been changed, altered, adjusted, fiddled with, withheld, or any other such imputation that the Honourable Member is trying to pass off on this House - unfortunately, but worse

yet, on the persons who are required to deal with those matters.

I therefore want to state very clearly that no department under me has been participating in changing any methodology. That is my input. Thank you.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: I am grateful for any intervention from the other side. However, I will say this. I still maintain that the figures that are presented in relation to the declines in foreign reserves are consistent over the last eight years. I maintain that the tourism spend, apart from the 2013 period where there was an increase, has seen a decline every single year. I make the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, that if we had continued on the current trajectory that we were on, we should be making at least \$3 billion from our tourism at this juncture. And we are not, Madam Deputy Speaker. So whether members on the other side wish to twist what I am saying or wish not to respond to the things that, as far as I am concerned, are important to the Barbadian people, that is a matter for them. The people of this country will judge that for themselves. But if the figures are not adding up, if the people are not spending the money to be able to allow us to pay from tourism for all of the other social services that we enjoy, to make sure that people can get their drugs at the hospital, to make sure that children can have tertiary education, I say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the current administration needs to look at the figures, seriously look at where they are going wrong, and do whatever they can to fix the situation in which we now find ourselves. No matter what you say, that is the fundamental principle of this debate. These figures, I hope, do not lie. And I will go on the figures as presented.

But as much as you will make a song and dance about arrivals, you cannot escape the fact that what we really rely on is not the number of people who come here. We rely on these people to spend money. This administration would have presided over the end of the American Airlines flight from New York. We made the representations on this side that that was a legacy carrier. A number of people, business people in particular, would have wanted the advantage of having a direct flight from Barbados to New York. We have seen the introduction of the JetBlue flights. We have even heard the administration touting that there are additional flights to be added. And we are grateful that we have additional airlift coming to the island. But what to me is very telling is that what we said back then in relation to the business travellers and the persons who were the legacy carriers has now come to fruition, because each of those flights have now put on a business class segment within, whether it is JetBlue or Delta, to accommodate the persons who would have been the American Airlines legacy carriers. So the point we had been making back then is that simply there are people who would want that direct flight, who would want to pay a

little bit more money for an additional set of comfort, and perhaps by losing that flight, when other destinations were picking up the American Airlines flight, that was not in the best interest of Barbados.

We have gone full circle. We have probably lost business because people did not want to come. In some cases, they went through Miami, made the connection from there, which obviously takes a little bit longer. Sometimes they have to overnight in order to come to Barbados, and that is from New York. So at the end of the day, we can say it was a business decision on American Airlines' part. But if the route becomes unprofitable because this administration does not spend the money to market this country and it owes people money that it is not able to pay, do not say it is a business decision only on the part of American Airlines. It is also the failing of this administration to address the issues when they were presented.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just have one other issue which I cannot sit down without addressing. And it is the issue that will relate to this project if it is that we do not address it in a serious way. And it is the issue of crime. And I keep having to mention this issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, because while it is a problem facing this entire country, I have had a recent scenario where a warning was issued by the American Embassy in relation to the Pine East West Boulevard, in relation to the dangerous nature of persons who were traversing in vehicles and persons being robbed in their vehicles. And it is unfortunate that incidents like that happen because tourists coming to Barbados, people who are working here who are from overseas, want to be able to know that they can do so with a certain level of comfort, that they can traverse their various destinations to do so.

Now, for my constituents, it particularly concerns me, Madam Deputy Speaker, because a lot of work through myself and certainly various community groups in the area have been fighting against a negative image of people who come particularly from the Pinelands community. And therefore, I say to this administration, and particularly to the Attorney General through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I urge you to address the issues of crime in this country, to do whatever is necessary to stem the levels of gun violence in this country. We can say, on the one hand, we do not want to alert people to what is happening, but whether we alert them to it or not, the embassies are alerting them to the issues that are presented by Barbadians. And at the end of the day, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is something which the Attorney General needs to pay attention to.

At the end of the day, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the place that many Barbadians call home. And whether the learned Attorney General wishes to make mock sport,

as Bajans would say, about the issue, whether he does not want to come to St. Michael South East to see the fact that there are a number of unemployed youth who sometimes look me in the face and say, ma'am, I don't know what else to do, I may have to rob somebody - that is the reality. If he doesn't want to come there because he himself fears it, then we have a problem. Madam Deputy Speaker, I urge you that before the situation gets out of control, before even people from the outside give a bad name to the people in the constituency, I urge the Honourable Member who holds the portfolio for dealing with crime in this country to address this as a matter of urgency. My people in St. Michael South East don't have the luxury of having somewhere to run. Many of them are unemployed, many of them are underemployed, and therefore they have concerns, like all of us in this Chamber, that they need to be able to go about their day-to-day business freely, as do the tourists who come to this country.

The former Member who represented St. Michael South East often spoke about community tourism, and that is why I find it important to enter that into this debate. Because a community such as the Pine, with one of the largest housing district developments in this country, will find it difficult if the United States Embassy continues to issue releases of this nature, which, while not specifically identifying a community within the Pine, speaks to the community on the border or roads within the border, and oftentimes it gives the suggestion not that people have come into the area to commit crimes, but often it gives the impression that people in the community are the wrongdoers. And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the Attorney General in his efforts to fight crime and violence in this country. I believe that when we listen to the reports that have been expressed by influential members in the society who have done the research, we do have a problem in relation to the level of gun violence in this country, and we need to stem this decline. So whatever the Honourable Minister has to do, I urge him to do it for all Barbadians. But I particularly make the plea on behalf of the residents of St. Michael South East and also on the residents on the border, because they are also affected by the East West Boulevard. There may not be residents in my constituency, but they too are affected by this as well.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would hope that consideration is given to ensuring that this project is able to meet the demands of the wider society. I hope that members on the other side will be able to also answer some of the issues that I have raised, in particular in relation to the employment situation at this particular site, and I would hope that they would address the issues in relation to ensuring that we do not break ground on this project and then there are considerable delays in being able to have this project come to fruition. Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the resolution, as I am sure many of the others on this side also will do. And I wish that this administration will not

allow this project to be yet another one where people get excited because the groundbreaking ceremony happens. We have heard this administration say they are going to open the St. John Polyclinic on several occasions and it does not happen. The track record of this administration is not becoming a very good one. So do not be surprised if people feel that some of these projects will not get off the ground. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to this resolution. Of course, there isn't really much I can say on what the speaker who just took her seat had to say. I remember what I would do is offer some very free advice. I did start my career in opposition and I can just tell you, make your own mistakes. Don't make anybody's mistakes for them. So be very careful. People sticking notes in front of you and then running out of your hair, embattled leaders and so on. That's my advice to you. Make your own mistakes. And you need to be conscious of what you're saying and how it impacts people.

We have embarked on a relationship with the People's Republic of China and there's bipartisan agreement on the need for having relations with that country. And that speaker just took her seat. And I now have to spend five minutes assuring the government and the people of the People's Republic of China that all is well. The member said that the deal should be shelved. That is not the real Barbados Labour Party position. Note that when the Leader of the Opposition was in here, she was very proud, sort of walking. When the member for St. Michael North West was speaking, she led not one, but two missions to China to make projects like this possible. And that's the reality. So I want to get that clear.

With respect to the 60/40 negotiation, I don't mind taking blame for that. We've had Chinese projects in this country and in this region where 100 per cent of the labour was from China. And we have negotiated on a 200 million US dollar project to have 40 per cent of the labour from Barbados. We should be lauded for that. And in fact it would be zero percent - there will be none, no employment. Nobody with a Suzuki van from Pine or Wildey that drives around to construction sites won't get nothing. No needle workers, won't get nothing. All the induced labour that comes around from a large project like this. So I think we need to be very clear.

Let me just say I am not going to speak for compliment. The China National Complete Plant Import and Export Corporation Limited - a mouthful. That's why I guess they say COMPLANT, an acronym. But I am certain that based on the skill that is available among our subcontractors, our sub-trades, the specialists and the

labour here, they will get nowhere near to that 60 per cent. They're going to hire more Barbadians, particularly from the largest parish in Barbados where the project is located. Lots of skilled people who will offer compelling reasons why COMPLANT don't have to go nowhere near the 60 per cent. But the 60 per cent I maintain is a lot better than the 100 per cent that we have seen on other projects. So let's put pay to that.

But you know, that entire presentation - it was almost pained - because tourism is doing well and that's causing some belly hurt for some people in the Barbados Labour Party. So it was belly hurt. I understand. I always maintain the point when the numbers were down, when we had the worst economic crisis that this country had ever seen. Remember, the member for St. Michael South East wasn't here yet. She might have been in the other place, I'm not sure. But I used to always make the point that we have to look at the other numbers that matter. How many people are employed, how many hotel rooms are under construction. The real statistics that matter. And I was constantly being told, numbers are down, numbers are down, numbers are down. Now the numbers are up. Now we're hearing a different story.

Remember I had the gall to talk about the situation with the airlift from New York. JetBlue, one of the most prestigious airlines in the world, has inaugurated its Mint service to Barbados. That is their flagship. Flat seats - that is their top airline product. Only two international destinations are enjoying that: Aruba - and by the way, we're outpacing them four to one in the bookings, doing very well - and Barbados. So let's be clear.

You know, the little sotto voce attacks on Sandals - when I came into this chamber, it was almost three years ago now, October 2012, when I came in this chamber and gave a ministerial statement on the Sandals situation, I mentioned it would be a seismic shift in tourism having Sandals, particularly in the US market. The opposition suddenly, because they knew it was true, is why they opposed the Sandals situation. You know, they opposed Sandals because they knew it was true. As I speak to you, our numbers year to date are 28 per cent up out of the US market. A lot of it has to do with Sandals. This is what we said would happen and it is happening. So you understand where the belly hurt is coming from now and that is where you'll get those pained presentations.

So I just want to put a few things straight. But you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the performance that has been occurring hasn't been by coincidence. It has been a number of agencies working together - Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. doing what it has to do. I mentioned the new service out of JetBlue, increased capacity out of Air Canada, etc. But of course, Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., who are the line Ministry - this money that we are

voting for today will be on-lent to BTI to do this project. They have been doing a lot to also deliver on an investment strategy for Barbados as well, that will see a series of tourism investment projects on the south coast and the west coast, private sector and public sector, that in essence will allow us to break the trend of peaks and valleys - that's probably the better way to put it. We want to see right troughs. We want to see sustained growth over a period of time.

And it's not only related to arrivals. We, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, gave Barbados for the first time a tourism master plan. The whole idea there was to deal with issues of the carrying capacity of the destination - not only with respect to accommodation, transport, infrastructure and other facilities - how many visitors we can handle, what is the optimum number of rooms that we should have. And we have concluded that having lost 1 600 rooms over the last 20 years or so, we need to build back that room stock and then look to grow it to that point where we can have the maximum benefit from this tourism industry. So we are not doing things through happenstance or chance. There is a plan and we are of course working very closely with the officials in the Economic Affairs Section of the Ministry of Finance, the Projects Unit, and of course the Ministry of Finance itself.

And this is as good a time, Madam Deputy Speaker, for me to also commend the member for St. Michael North West, not only for moving this resolution, but also for his steadfast support in the strategy that we have adopted at Tourism and of course for constantly doing his part to see that we can have this creative investment strategy. The member had direct responsibility for Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. He no longer has a direct responsibility, but obviously, as the Minister of Finance, he still has superintendence over the entire exercise of how we engage in debt and the right debt and how we manage it. And I think the member should be commended, because I think any Minister of Finance anywhere in the world would love to bring a resolution like this to the House in terms of the terms and so on. So I think we have to look at the positive that comes out of this and there's an awful, awful, awful lot of it.

So we have also recognised that this issue of our room stock falling has been a problem, and therefore we are determined that we can increase our inventory of rooms to recover those 1 600 rooms that we have lost. And of course, the room stock on the island is concentrated in two main areas. 58 per cent of the room stock is on the south coast, 40 per cent is on the west coast. And of course, there are two hotels in St. Philip - a huge one by the name of Crane, and a small one called Tropical Winds, the old Robin's Nest. So bringing back Sam Lord's Castle also helps create some parity in terms of the accommodation sector being stretched across a larger area, reaching more

communities, so that the induced impact of the spend then reaches greater numbers of people. So the strategy again of going into Sam Lord's Castle and doing what we have to do is based on the idea that we need to move away from the traditional locations where tourism activity has taken place on the west coast and on the south coast, in the strictest sense of the word.

The other thing, of course - and the member for St. Michael North West spent some time on this - is that the island has not been able to attract international brands of late. We have a few at the moment: Marriott, Courtyard, Hilton, Fairmont, Radisson. But there are actually five branded hotels and they're only 14 per cent of our inventory. By bringing Wyndham on board, it gives us another brand and a very strong brand. As a matter of fact, up to last week, it was the largest brand. But obviously with Marriott joining with Starwood now, they will actually pass Wyndham in terms of the number of rooms that they control globally. But Wyndham still have the largest timeshare - they own a company called RCI.

And one of the other things Wyndham has said they would do - and this factored in our decision to go with Wyndham - they will maintain the iconic name of Sam Lord's Castle. It will be Sam Lord's Castle by Wyndham. In essence, we maintain that iconic name and that was very, very important to us. And therefore the instant recognition and the attraction to the marketing might of that brand is of course extremely important to us.

The other thing that we have to accept is that the niche markets as well - weddings and honeymoons, for example, something that Barbados has been a little sluggish in - the Wyndham brand will permit us to go after that niche in a stronger way as well. The Caribbean is one of the most popular places for that particular niche. But Barbados, we all can confess, has lagged behind some of our other neighbours in that department. Having quality brands will certainly facilitate the advancement of work into that niche, along of course with the MICE niche. MICE, of course, is the acronym for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. And we think that Sam Lord's Castle by Wyndham will allow us to also go after the MICE niche as well. So we are looking forward to that.

I think I need to speak on this issue of the investment climate and the policy initiatives that we have taken specifically towards improving the competitiveness of the industry, which in turn would affect the investment environment. I was told about hotels closing, but I believe that was a reference - a throwback to the 1996 to 2007 period when we had those hotels closing. As far as my information stands, according to the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association, a number of hotels have been refurbishing their properties to raise standards. 34 hotels did major renovations in 2015. I don't see hotels closing.

34 hotels in Barbados - we don't have a thousand hotels here. 34 hotels is a lot of hotels. And that goes to show that we are not only promoting foreign direct investment, but we want to see domestic investment as well. We want to see the captains of industry in the hoteliers locally also enjoying the confidence to go and sit down in front of a bank manager and borrow money and refurbish their hotel. And that is the reality of what's happening on the ground. I don't know about this invective about how badly hotels are doing with their bankers and so on. I know the reality is they're refurbishing. And that was the whole point behind creating this different environment for promoting investment. The concessions that we gave on the inputs to the sector was about competitiveness.

in order that people would feel the need to invest and also to attract foreign direct investment as well. I'm not going to say we don't want the foreign investment, we want the foreign investment. But it's important to make the point that we need to go ahead with the system for the food and beverage concessions to the tourism industry has been operationalized and is working well. BTI, the agency responsible for tourism investment can also say apart from the refurbishment that in 2016 we will see Sugar Bay and Sandy Bay private sector projects. Messrs. Gordon Seal and Peter Odle are the principals of those 300 rooms will come on stream. Sandals, much maligned, has already started its efforts and it will add an additional 188 rooms to the Cazarina site. And the preparations are advanced. That was Sandals Beaches starting September in St. Peter, September next year as well. And that will add another 400 suites as well. The Hyatt by the old Harbour Police Station, 190 rooms. They are in the final stages of their submissions to the Chief Town Planner. I just had a chat with the Chief Town Planner only yesterday. So the Hyatt rooms as well will be coming on stream. And I want to single out that project for mention because that opens up again a new corridor for tourism development - that Bay Street area. Carlisle Bay will stretch right up to the Needham's peninsula where Hilton is. But it is another area as well. So we've had the south coast, the west coast, we now have the southeast. In St. Philip, I know you will have Bay Street as well. And that lovely beach there can accommodate a couple of hotels. Now that beach is very popular for locals from my constituency and the Member for City of Bridgetown. And I don't see any reason why, as obtains on every other coast in Barbados, locals and tourists cannot bathe together. And let me also make it very clear, and I made this point at a branch meeting lately, that neither party supports privatising beaches. So we don't even have to discuss that. And if it is that these beaches are popular with locals, well, part of the whole experience in Barbados is the interface that visitors have with locals. That's part of our folklore. We know that. And I don't think it needs to change. I think we need to embrace it. Because again, it is opportunity, it is economic development. It is moving us closer and closer to those 10 000 rooms that we need to

have by the year 2020 that will allow us to enjoy near enough full employment in Barbados.

So we have to do the arithmetic. Sandals will be up to 280 rooms. Amaryllis, I mentioned already 150 rooms. Sandy Bay, the old Sandy Beach, 153 rooms - I'm sorry, 500 rooms for Cazarina. Between the 280 and the 220 they'll be up to 500. Hyatt at 190 rooms. Wyndham, Sam Lord's 450 rooms - I'm going to speak to that directly obviously - and Sandals Beaches 400 suites as well. So we have a number of projects and we want to hopefully see a contribution to the gross domestic product of Barbados somewhere along the lines of US\$262 million. 4 600 people directly employed at these facilities. And of course we are likely to see in terms of the knock-on effects many other thousands positively impacted and employed coming from that decision.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to the Sam Lord's project, I promised to go into some more detail. The resolution does deal with that site. The plan is the hotel will of course be a five-star hotel. 450 branded rooms. The smallest ones will be 600 square feet. So these are very sizeable rooms and the majority of them actually will be suites. And as I speak to you, a team from BTI - I should say a team from Tourism because it's BTI as well as BTMI - and they're meeting with the Wyndham folks in Miami finalising the concepts for the property. This is important because Complant have made it very clear that they are ready to roll as soon as we have the groundbreaking on the 23rd of November. We are hoping to go straight into the construction.

And just in case it was not clear on the resolution - I thought it was - we couldn't get to this point. We couldn't have officials leaving Beijing from Ex-Im Bank to come here to sign documents on Friday if we hadn't done our counterpart provisions. That money, the 15 per cent, has been provided and as a matter of fact has already been identified and is in the Estimates. It would have been in the Estimates because we mentioned it in fact during the housing resolution when we mentioned the reclamation. The whole point in going to the Sam Lord's Castle site was because we had sold the site and the proceeds - we made it very clear when we sold the Amman site in St. Peter that money was not to be leaked out. That money was to be put back into tourism investment and that is where the funds have come from to provide the equity in the project. And therefore again, I just want to give that assurance in the event that anyone chose to take anything to heart.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the project is expected - the economic impact, I think the Minister of Tourism spoke on that already. The revenue of the hotel and the expenditure on island are combined to give a visitor expenditure of US\$73.4 million. Again, if you take the leakage into consideration, the direct contribution to the

GDP is just over US\$35 million. But let me just add to that and say that one of the reasons why the Barbados tourism product is actually working so hard is to reduce leakages sector-wide. And that as a matter of fact was a Manifesto pledge in 2008. So we are actively working to see how we can increase that number in terms of the contribution to GDP. And we have to see what we can do to reduce the leakages to the sector.

In terms of jobs, we expect over a thousand people to be directly employed. Indirect, you might have up to 3 300 jobs on completion. The construction itself will probably be in the range of five or six hundred people on the site at any time. And I also need to give the House the assurance that the project management element will be a consortium of local and overseas consultants. There has been some concern - I am actually surprised the Opposition, given what happened in the Bahamas, there have been these issues about quality in some of these projects - and we have ensured that we will not be making that level of investment and not have the quality assurance and quality control checks for the project. I happen to know a little bit about this field, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I insisted that we will have the appropriate project management team in place. It is a massive site, 50 acres, \$200 million, a large company. And you can't just have a clerk of works walking about with a black lead behind his ear trying to keep track of that. You need to have appropriate mechanisms and the right team in place to see that this commitment is actualised. We don't want any of the horror stories that we hear happening in some other jurisdictions. I don't need to get into that. But I think we all know what we're talking about and we are not afraid to confront it directly because it's important that we can see that this project in its 20 years can realise the US\$2.2 billion which is what we hope that it will achieve.

And even though the Minister of Finance mentioned it, because there is no formal sovereign guarantee as such - but there is a serious commitment, government to government - it will not be necessary for the Ministry of Finance to pick up any slack in terms of topping up for servicing the loan when the moratorium expires and you have to start to pay the principal. You have to pay the interest obviously before then. But we are satisfied with our model and what we have here. That will not occur, that it will not become necessary. As a matter of fact, if I can encourage the House, I will just mention that the projected revenue from the 450 rooms is expected to be US\$44.7 million, while another US\$2.6 million will be collected from the commercial spaces on the site and conference facilities should bring in another US\$1 million a year. So in total you're talking about a revenue base of US\$73.4 million and we need about half of that to obviously meet your expenses. Operating expenses excluding the debt service and amortisation will be about 50 per cent of the room revenue. So in other words, the little bonus they get

from the rental and the conference facilities can go in the pot to help service the loan. And this should be music to the ears of the Member for Christ Church East - it is going to be compliant with the green economy in terms of use of renewable energy et cetera. And that in itself also will help bring down some of our expenditure and give us a little more elbow room to make sure we can service this loan. So it all works. It is a very good deal.

The Minister mentioned the fact that the brands were so keen and we actually could have chosen from a couple of different brands. I mentioned a few reasons why we felt the Wyndham was the right one. But we also - believe it or not - there are some hospitality investment companies that are ready to even buy the thing off of us. But that's not in our interest at the moment. It just goes to show, because of how compelling the arithmetic is, that investors are ready. They have their thumbs out and they're ready to take it off of us if we were inclined in that direction. But that's not what we're doing. And that is good. It is good news. So we are convinced that we will have the adequate amounts to service what we need to repay. We also are convinced that this will be a major positive impact in terms of how our tourism functions.

Again, I think it's important to also say that bringing in the branded rooms that are so strong internationally also drives the demand for airlift. Madam Deputy Speaker, the reality is that a large chunk of the tourism budget is spent supporting airlines. But if we have greater demand for the destination through these international brands and the improved domestic brands as well - the indigenous brands are also important. I mean, Sandy Lane, a very strong brand, very, very strong brand. But it is very much an indigenous brand to Barbados. But if we can continue to promote the right climate for the indigenous investment in our tourism product, we will then not find it necessary, Madam Deputy Speaker, to spend so much money on trying to get airlines to come here. And I think that is the fundamental point that needs to be made.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I mentioned earlier that our numbers for 2015 are up. The Minister of Finance also mentioned it. The Member for St. Michael North West mentioned 15 per cent year to date and he also mentioned that the value added of the sector is up. It is not true to say that spend is down. You can't compare the spend for a previous year to the spend for this year. You have to compare like with like. And therefore I am saying that we have seen an increase in spend and we will continue to see an increase in spend if we have the right strategies all aligning - getting our investment right, getting our product development correct and of course getting our marketing correct. That is where we are, that is what we are doing in tourism.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in fact, we are in early November right now. And do you know you can't get a hotel room in Barbados? We have some journalists coming in for the Food, Wine and Rum Festival. We had to put them up and we had to beg Sir Charles to put them up in Apes Hill for us. Can't find a hotel room. That is reality. But again, I would have thought that would be good news for some people. But some people, as I said, getting belly hurt. They're getting belly hurt because things are so good. It is amazing. And I would hope that people would be happy - not necessarily for me or for the Democratic Labour Party or the Government - but think about all of those hotel workers who've been holding strain all of these years. They have sacrificed in many cases, haven't gotten a pay rise. The points obviously would have been down sometimes because people weren't coming back like before, and now they can see a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel.

The Barbados economy is inextricably linked to the fortunes of tourism and that appears to be so in the foreseeable future. And certainly even as the economy evolves and embraces other sectors like the international business sector, that will still be closely allied to tourism. So we need to ensure that we continue to stay the course in terms of developing and improving our tourism offerings. This Sam Lord's Castle redevelopment project is important, I think, on several counts. And I would therefore want to lastly, but by no means leastly, speak to the direct impact on the immediate surrounding areas. It is true that in the days when Sam Lord's Castle ruled, Crane was just a small hotel. It's hard to imagine - Crane was literally almost a glorified guest house. It just had a handful of rooms. I mean, that has been changed now and in fact Crane is expanding and that's wonderful. But bringing back Sam Lord's Castle will definitely have a significant impact on that community. And I think it also shows again the strategy of this Government of developing that eastern corridor.

I'm sure you are happy to hear that on Friday the St. John - I nearly called it the St. John Polyclinic, but it's so much more than the Polyclinic - it's a health and social services complex that is going to be opened. So we understand that for all the talk about Democratic Labour Party folks in St. Michael, we are getting out and doing some significant rural development. And I think this Sam Lord's Castle project can also be seen in that context and therefore is important from that point of view. We therefore are very happy to see that it has come on stream and we of course wish the developers all well.

Let me once again join the Minister of Finance and thank all Members of this House, including most of the ones on the other side of the House, and in thanking the People's Republic of China for working with us - specifically the Ex-Im Bank who processed the loan in

record time - and of course Complant who have already started to hit the ground running for everything that they have done. This is a good project for us and we continue to wish the project very well.

It's always important, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we should be thankful and not allow successes to go to our head. Tourism is still an extremely fickle industry. I just need to refer to what happened in Paris on the 13th of November. Very unfortunate. And that will impact tourism in continental Europe. It will impact tourism worldwide. And the confidence factor - yes, the downing of the airline in Egypt and these incidents remind us just how fickle the sector is. And of course, I take this opportunity to extend condolences to all those who were impacted, including Caribbean citizens who were impacted in both cases. In the case of the Paris bombing, there are two French departments that are members of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. And I know that - in fact I had reached out to my counterparts in those two jurisdictions and offered sympathy via the telephone. And I do this publicly again, acknowledging that we are in an industry where things like that impact us and can impact us at any point in time. And so we are grateful for what we are achieving. But we will continue to work hard to make sure that we can have a robust tourism offering and one that is diversified.

I like to compare the Barbados tourism strategy to one of a mutual fund as opposed to a stock. If you take the Bahamas and Jamaica, 80 per cent of their visitors come from North America. But we have a scenario where we have a little more balance in terms of UK, Europe, North America and the emerging markets that we are trying to develop - be it continental Europe, the rest of the Caribbean, Latin America. So you have more of a balance. Unlike when a stock is down, it's down, and when it's up, it's up - in a mutual fund it is the collection of securities. And so we have a collection of source markets. And having the right product mix is also important in that regard because there are some people who will be attracted to the Sam Lord's Castle type scenario - suites, luxury suites in a resort setting. But then there would be those - let's say for example the Europeans - they prefer the more modest self-catered type units in a St. Lawrence Gap type scenario. Of course Americans love anything with a brand on it, and different strokes for different folks. And we are giving ourselves that mix so that we can have a robust sector going forward in the medium and long term.

I want once again to thank everyone for making this possible and express my gratitude to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm the Member for Christ Church - [Inaudible.] - 30 minutes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for 40 minutes for dinner until a quarter to 10 this evening.

The question that the House be suspended until 9.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: – when suspension was taken on Government Business Order Number 21. And with that we shall continue. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, sir, I take the opportunity, sir, to share a few brief comments on the matter which is attracting our attention with respect to the resolution for the purpose of financing 85 per cent of the Sam Lord's Castle Hotel project being undertaken by the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc.

Sir, I want to begin by emphasising for the record and removing any semblance of doubt on the position of the Barbados Labour Party vis-à-vis this loan. I say so, sir, because - even though you do not hear them, sir, and Her Honour the Deputy Speaker would not hear them - I have heard the sort of sotto voce remarks made which seem to suggest that the government benches, sort of beneath the breath, and, sir, it would seem to suggest that there is a misappreciation of the Barbados Labour Party's position.

Sir, we hold the Chinese in the highest esteem. And on the matter of tourism, sir, the Barbados Labour Party really takes no guidance from the government insofar as the benefits to be derived from a wholesome cooperative relationship between the People's Republic of China and Barbados is concerned. Permit me to remind the House through you, sir, that it was a Barbados Labour Party administration that secured Approved Tourism Destination status from China. I remind the House through you as well, sir, that it was a Barbados Labour Party administration that began and advanced the concept of having a direct air link between China and Barbados. That those two useful tourism-oriented initiatives have not been followed through is not through any fault of our own. But, sir, it perhaps reflects a lack of industriousness on the part of the government.

I make the point, sir, because while we will support this resolution and do support it, there are a few things that need to be said. The economy of Barbados has been in the doldrums for some seven years or so. In June of this year

we were told by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, that we would be looking at a 2 per cent growth in the Barbados economy. And indeed, I believe his friend and close associate and adviser, the Governor of the Central Bank, would have indicated as much in Central Bank reports. Lo and behold, only a few weeks ago, if so much, the Central Bank Quarterly Report came out in November for the month of September. And that is also a source of concern for us - by the way, sir, the increasingly tardy nature of the reports. But substantively, in terms of its content, the projected 2 per cent growth for this year, sir, is now 0.3 of a percentage point - well within the margin of error. Indeed, sir, no growth at all, to all intents and purposes.

So that when I say, sir, that the economy has been in the doldrums, and that we are currently, sir, in a state of stagnation, you understand what I mean. And we are too far off of the mark of growth - or the growth rate - that Barbados needs to record in order to stay on a stable path of development.

So, therefore, when once there is good news - and this resolution constitutes, to all intents and purposes, good news - I understand why the Minister of Finance went on and on and painfully on. Because he is a man, sir, with very little good news to report. And perhaps this has been the first moment in his tenure as Minister of Finance that he has been able to come to the House and say something which we could treat as good news. So I understand that and I empathise with him. I share with him his joy. The Labour Party shares in his joy. That great things are supposed to happen at Sam Lord's Castle - let us not misunderstand that.

But I must, sir, as a matter of first priority, enter the caveat that virtually all of our sectors are in decline at the moment, except for that spark which is the tourism sector. And, sir, tourism as a sector may constitute about 6 per cent or so of the overall Barbados economy - maybe a little more. And the fact of the matter is, sir, that if we continue on this growth path where all of the other sectors are virtually dormant and stagnant, then, sir, we are going to need substantial performance achievements in tourism for Barbados to see the kind of growth of 2 per cent to 3 per cent that we all know we need, if we are to maintain the stability of the growth path for development that we would want on both sides of this House to have achieved. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, sir, that as I said, we are falling well short of that target.

And what I believe the House must not lose sight of is the point which my colleague, the Member for St. Michael South East, was making when, in effect, what she is saying to the House is that at the end of the day, when you look at the spend recorded from visitors to this island, yes, we may be having more visitors, but we are in a

situation where there is a decline in spend from tourism. And that, sir - and I want to be very fair - that, sir, may not be entirely the fault of the government. Because I know that when I travelled this year, I spent a little bit less than I would otherwise like to spend because things are tight with me. And I suspect, sir, that might be true of other people coming to Barbados and travelling as well. I don't know to what extent members of the Cabinet can understand and commiserate and empathise. Because, sir, to all intents and purposes, the members of the front bench of the government, the Democratic Labour Party, stand in stark contradistinction to the rest of Barbados. Things are better for them than perhaps they ever were before for most of them. But, sir, the reality is that for most people in this country, we would understand that a travelling person with family and so on may spend a little bit less. So I don't blame the government entirely for that.

But we must also understand that there are some reasons which are entirely within the control of the Government of Barbados that also result in visitors spending less in this country - not only that things are tight in parts of Europe where they come from, or tight in the United States and in Canada. But, sir, there are some realities here on the ground as well. So that when the Minister of Finance, for example, in the last budget, went into cavalier mode and played the bat far from the pad, as he is sometimes prone to do, and sought to pull \$200 million out of the Barbados economy in new taxes, the reality is that a person coming here and being confronted with the reality of spending a little bit of money in this country would realise - just as we who have to live here have to realise and endure - that the cost of living in Barbados is way too high and is climbing every day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, sir, in addition to that concern that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East made, there is another point I must touch on briefly. And that point, sir, is that with all the best wishes in the world - and I want to say and put on the record that the fact that the opposition embraces the idea of a Hyatt, embraces the idea of a Wyndham, embraces the idea of the other brands that are supposed to be on stream - we are happy to hear this. But, Mr. Speaker, sir, all of these projected arrivals of hotel developments are worth a snowball in hell if we continue to have a crime situation in Barbados that attracts travel advisories of the nature that we saw a couple of days ago. And that is the reality, sir, that when the United States State Department is in a position to put out a travel advisory with the specificity of the nature that we saw a few days ago, then, sir, it does not all go well for the tourism development thrust that this government is relying so heavily upon.

I want, sir, to speak very briefly to the question of the performance of the investment climate. Because the Minister took us there and the Minister should not just go

and say there are 34 hotels that benefited from concessions and so on and these 34 hotels represent a big lot of hotels. That is not the point. What the Minister should do is to make it clear to Barbadians how glad he is for the direction offered from this opposition bench - that when he came to this Parliament holding in hand concessions from Sandals only, and gave a long speech introducing or laying the fact of those concessions, and did not say one word about the rest of the hotel chains in Barbados and hoteliers in Barbados, that we brought it to the public's attention that that was not good enough. We brought it to the public's attention that they were here too long and had contributed too much.

He is raising himself to his hind legs. I will give way.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: On a point of order. Just to be clear, the ministerial statement that I brought in here did not speak exclusively to any concessions for Sandals. That statement expressly spoke to concessions to the sector. It set a threshold and it gave a commitment that that threshold would be lowered for the entire sector, which is exactly what transpired. It had nothing to do with any opposition pressure or opposition statement. You can send for it - it is a document of the House. Please provide a copy of the ministerial statement. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is as per the ministerial statement - exactly what happened. Thank you, Honourable Member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: I remember the statement well and I'm not really going to be dragged into debating the statement tonight. Save but to say that the statement would have been the - the concessions would have been there for persons who were making the kind of investment that was contemplated at the time being made in St. Peter. That kind of scale of investment and the position of the opposition, sir, then and now was to make the point that all across the south coast of Barbados there are hotels too who don't approximate that scale of investment. But they had to benefit from - and the result, sir, whether the Minister has to be dragged there kicking and screaming or he comes voluntarily, the inescapable result is that good sense finally dawned, the day dawned, sir, where the Minister came to Christian understanding and associated himself with the position of the Barbados Labour Party. We're not vexed with him. We are heartened that at least somewhere in the heart of the Democratic Labour Party there is the good understanding and goodwill towards the people of Barbados that they would take a little bit of good advice. So in that regard, sir, I know what the Minister meant, because I am singling him out and saluting him for his willingness to follow good advice.

I move to another point, Mr. Speaker, sir, that is that in 2007 when we demitted office, there was a \$500 million investment fund between China and the Caribbean. That fund, sir, has subsequently become a \$20 billion fund. And I want to be fair because I think Latin America is now on board. So it is between China, the Caribbean and Latin America - a \$20 billion fund for the purposes of infrastructure and construction.

Now, sir, there is a very subtle difference between what the Member for St. Michael South East spoke to on the matter of the construction at Sam Lord's Castle and the ratio of workers, and what the Minister of Tourism is saying. And I think, sir, that we have to be careful that we are not being misled. We have to watch the ball in flight, sir, and make sure that you get to the pitch of delivery. The reality, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that it is true - it is 100 per cent accurate to say that all across Latin America and the Caribbean and indeed Africa, the developing world has benefited from a relationship with China where, when China is offering you grant funds, you are getting the development done with full employment on the part of the Chinese and to some extent with concessionary loans as well. But, sir, we are in a situation where, never mind that we are getting it at concessionary rates, this money has to be paid back. And I think, sir, that let us not beat up on the Member for St. Michael South East - we have to understand that there is something to what she is saying. She is inviting this Parliament to understand that if it is that we have to pay back the money, then we also need to make sure that, in spite of the fact that we are glad for the arrangement we have with China, in spite of the fact that we hold the Chinese offer of assistance in the highest form of consideration, in spite of the fact that we know that there is nowhere else in the world that people are prepared to make this kind of accommodation, we still have to resolutely defend the interest of the people who sent us here and that the best possible relationship should be put in place in terms of the ratio of Chinese labour to Barbadian labour.

And I understand, and I sense, that it is her position that the 60 to 40 ratio is too low. She said - perhaps, I think I am correct in reflecting - that a 90/10 ratio. That may, sir, be a stretch. But I think, sir, that the reality is that we need to bend our minds to this. What is good enough in the circumstances? It is all too easy, I submit, to throw through the window the point that is being made without understanding that this is not the first time that the developing world has been confronted with this dilemma. We are not alone. There are many others who have benefited from the graciousness of the Chinese - the accommodation from a country that sees itself, even though it is a superpower, as part of the developing world. That is the position that the Chinese take. They see themselves and they market this kind of assistance as their contribution as part of the developing world themselves.

But, sir, Mr. Speaker, sir, then the issue that we have to ask is how much more can we get out of the relationship so as to ensure that we are generating employment on the projects? And this is an issue that has affected the republics in Africa. It is an issue that has affected the republics in Latin America. And I submit, sir, that it is something that we should be reflecting upon here in Barbados.

I go further, sir. I want to say that, you know, with \$500 million available in 2007 and \$20 billion a little while ago, the issue now has to be asked: what took this Government so long? Because effectively, I hear the chest-thumping of the Minister of Finance. But while we are glad that the Minister has something positive to say, we have to be mindful of the fact that eight years later he is now seeking to draw down funding that was available eight years ago. Is this more inertia on the part of the Democratic Labour Party? Is this part of the difficulty that we have seen repeatedly in this country, where it takes the Democratic Labour Party far too long to execute those things that we know have been on the table for a long, long time in the context of the development of tourism more broadly?

I want to draw to the attention of this House that I think it was in the last Budget that the land taxes on villas for rental purposes - the cap on those land taxes which was existing at \$60 000 - has now been removed. Now we are talking about developing tourism. We are talking about bringing more rooms into the hotel pool on one hand. But the villa rental pool is another substantial aspect of the Barbados tourism product. And I make this point because the Minister was speaking about diversity. And the fact of the matter is -

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute. You have three minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Yes, sir. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, sir, that with \$200 000 plus now being paid by some villa rental owners - villa owners who would normally rent the villas out to tourists - we are seeing, especially on the west coast, a situation where people are choosing not to rent. They can come down here, sir, and spend two or three months and then go back where they came from and shut it up. It means, sir, that the employment has dried up or is drying up. It means, sir, that Barbados is losing villa rentals as part of a pool of services that it previously had.

I make the point, sir, because again it is part of what I spoke to before - the way in which Government uses its taxation policy to directly impact on the quality of life in the country. It is something that I am asking the Government to reflect upon, because the consequences may not be immediately understandable to those who are not in those constituencies. But there are a lot of people who

make their living as the gardeners for the villas, the caretakers for the villas, the cook in the villa, the butler, et cetera. And some of these people make a very good living. And when once that pool starts to dry up, sir, again it is employment we are losing. But more importantly, a villa, sir, may be occupied at any one time by fifteen or twenty people. And when you have that kind of pool drying up as a result of too heavy taxation in the sector, it sets the tourism product back. It is a source of concern for me, sir, as a representative of a constituency that has such villas. Were the Member for St. James North here, I am sure he would want to share in that, as indeed would the Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I throw it out to the Government because I think that they need to reflect upon it, as indeed they must also, in my view, reflect upon the fact that now that St. Lawrence Castle is going to come on stream, we must now make sure that we build out the necessary support services across St. Philip and eastern Christ Church - whether it be nightlife and entertainment, which does not exist in significant quantities, restaurants which do not exist in significant quantities, the necessary dining and sporting facilities - so that this family-oriented resort and conference facility will have the supporting infrastructure that the Crane does not have, but that the two of them together, bringing with them nearly a thousand rooms between the two of them, would be able to have the benefit of the supplementary and supporting services and facilities which would make the tourism product in that sector of the island all the more marketable and meaningful. It is a phase that we have to go to, and I am sure that the Minister of Tourism would want to see us go there. I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, sir. Thank you very much. I could not let this opportunity pass without lending my voice in support of this resolution. A few months ago, I had the privilege of travelling to China with the Chief Executive Officer of Barbados Tourism Investment, where we had discussions with several banks and construction companies with respect to projects in Barbados. And of course, St. Lawrence Castle was one of the projects under discussion. And as life would have it, one of the things that we did discuss was the fact that operating in Barbados from a labour perspective would have been considerably different from how they operated in several other countries across the world. Because we had discussions with some companies who were speaking about whether or not they could provide all of the workers. And our position was that, given the maturity of our market, we would not and could not have a situation where all of their workers were provided from China, and that some mechanism would have to be put in place to ensure that a number of Barbadian workers or Barbadian companies were employed.

I heard the Member for St. Michael South East suggesting that if that was a deal-breaker, we should have left the deal on the table. But certainly when we look at the total picture - and in particular that upon completion of the project approximately 1 000 Barbadians will be employed directly and, indirectly, probably another 3 300 persons will be impacted - it was certainly clear to us that this is not the kind of deal that should be left on the table. And indeed, as a Member of Parliament for St. Philip South and from St. Philip, I could not look the people of St. Philip in their faces and say to them that we walked away from the development of St. Lawrence Castle - that has meant so much to so many families for so many years - because we were not happy with a labour split of 60/40, when, in fact, given our projections, over the next ten to twenty years this project will pay for itself ten times over.

I look forward, sir, as I am sure do the people of St. Philip and in particular the immediate environs of Long Bay, Ruby, Foul Bay, Atlantic Park, Bel Air, et cetera, to the rollout of this project. I agree and disagree with the Member for St. James Central that one of the things that we will have to do is to ensure that there are more attractions across St. Philip and across Barbados. But where we disagree is this notion that Government has to provide the facilities, that Government has to do everything. In fact, sir, my readings over the last couple of months would suggest that across the region scholars are saying that one of the problems we have had is that governments have been too large and have been getting involved in areas that should be left to the private sector, and as a result have been stifling the growth of the private sector and stifling the growth of the countries. There are some things that Government should not be involved in. I understand the plane facilities. I understand the street lighting. I look forward, for example, to the Bel Air main road being transformed, and Long Bay et cetera, and if possible having additional recreational facilities. But certainly Government should not be -

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, sir, I rise on a point of order because the Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never said, sir, that Government needs to be involved. I said the Government has to facilitate nightlife, sir. I used that as an example. Government would not be involved in nightlife or restaurants, fine dining and so on, sir. So I am not sure that the Honourable Member understands what I am saying, but I want to make it very clear that I am not saying Government has to do it. I am saying Government has to create the facilitating environment.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: No point. Thank you. Because, Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is a matter of interpretation.

I believe the member for St. Michael South East, for example, in speaking of tourist spend, will suggest that it was government, government had to extract more, etc. When, in fact, many of these areas, in terms of attractions, etc., are left to the private sector. And what we have to do as a government is to facilitate them. But there are many areas that government cannot and will not and should not be involved in. So, sir, as I said, I look forward to the rollout of this project over the next couple of weeks. I look forward to the groundbreaking ceremony next week, and I look forward to the start of the project as soon thereafter as possible, because if all goes well, come 2018 or early 2019, we should be opening the doors to this historic site, which should lend improvement to the lives of many Barbadians, but moreover, many families from the immediate environs in Phillips.

So there will come a time when I am going to have to spend lots of time discussing crime as a whole in Barbados. There are some commentators that will suggest that, in fact, there is something that you can do and say presto, and automatically all the ills will disappear and all the challenges that you have in terms of crime, not only in Barbados, but crime across the region, that in fact they will disappear. But the first thing, sir, is that we have to accept that one does not arrive where we are immediately. That, in fact, there are several issues, there are several matters that would have taken place over the last couple of years - 10, 15 years, et cetera - that would lend itself to a situation where you can have increased crime not only in Barbados, but across the region. As I said, sir, that will take some time and there will come a point in time pretty soon where we will have to have a very long and thorough discussion on this.

Suffice to say, sir, that the role of the Barbados Police Force and the Office of the Attorney General, and the Attorney General himself, who I know very well, in fact takes the issue of crime very, very seriously. We accept that, in fact, a stable Barbados will mean more visitors coming to Barbados and will mean more visitors being able to traverse Barbados with freedom like they do now. So I say continuously, sir, that in spite of our challenges, the Barbados that I live in on a daily basis is not as bad as some quarters would have you believe. Now, it is not a desirable thing for us to have the type of statement which was issued recently by the United States Government, but they were basically reporting what we read in the daily newspapers on a consistent basis. If there is any consolation, I believe that I saw a similar statement for the Bahamas and Jamaica, et cetera. These things happen from time to time, and I am sure, as happened under the Barbados Labour Party, our challenge, of course, is to ensure that we place enough bodies in the right area, utilise technology, et cetera.

But more importantly, we have to find initiatives. And I agree with the member for St. Michael South East in this regard because I pass through her constituency two, three times a day, going to and from my office, and I see the large number of young people beside the road. And it is a fact that youth unemployment not only in Barbados, but across the region, is of significant concern to us. So we therefore have to utilise the limited resources that we have. But we have to put programmes in place to ensure that we can capture more of these young people into work, into vocational studies, and put them into programmes so that they can utilise their talents more. The police officer assigned to me will tell you, sir, that on afternoons or mornings when I drive through that area in particular, I normally say, you know, this is one of these areas where we need to find some programmes to get more of these young people from being beside the road. So consistently, it does not matter what time of day I pass through, you see them.

So it is of concern to me. If the member for St. Michael South East would like me to visit certain parts of the Pine with her, I am willing to visit. I offered to visit with her when her constituents wrote to me asking me to stop the bad behaviour on certain parts of the area where, in fact, the police came and the NHC came and knocked down a shed. And the member for St. Michael South East went and gave them a tent and told them to continue keeping noise as much as they like. And her response to me was that the young people need some place to enjoy themselves.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: I rise on a point of order. Yes, I remember. It is deeply regrettable that the honourable Attorney General would utter such a statement in this Chamber. On no occasion have I given young men a tent after the NHC and the police would have raided the location. The tent that was in the location was given to young people in the area to allow a children's event to be held in the area. It was not after the police had raided the area. So I believe that the honourable Attorney General should get his facts straight. Indeed, he is, in fact, the Attorney General. And one would expect that if he comes to this Chamber to raise allegations against me that he would get his facts straight.

Mr. SPEAKER: [Inaudible.] I could decide on that.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, just for the record, I actually shared a correspondence with the member for St. Michael South East, and I said to the member for St. Michael South East that if what is being written here is true, then the member for St. Michael South East needs to address it. And at that point in time, I always speak the truth. I always speak the truth. And you know what I am saying is true. You know what I am saying is true. You know what I am saying is true.

Anyway, sir, the point I am making, sir, is that I am quite willing to go into any district in Barbados if I can make a difference in terms of interacting with the young people. Because it is better for us as leaders to go to see how we can help more of our young people, and we cannot do it from a distance. So if the member for St. Michael South East is right and wants my assistance and wants my intervention in terms of traversing her constituency, I am quite willing to make myself available. I am quite, quite willing to make myself available.

So there is not a lot I can add in terms of the potential of the Sam Lord's Castle project. The member for St. Michael South Central and the member for St. Michael North West have done an excellent job in terms of providing Barbadians and providing this Parliament with an update in terms of how this US\$170 million will be utilised and what a transformation it will make to this country. I, however, want to make this point because I remember saying to the member for St. Michael South Central a couple of years ago, when he was being vilified in this Chamber, that in fact he should hold fast to what he was doing, that history will prove that he would be one of the most, if not the most, successful Minister of Tourism in post-independence Barbados. I remember saying that to him because, in fact, it is not by accident that in the member's contribution he said that he approaches the tourism sector in Barbados like a mutual fund as opposed to a stock.

Because what we inherited was a tourism plant that was dependent on two areas - dependent on the United Kingdom and Canada, full stop. So that when the crisis came in 2008, automatically, having our eggs in two baskets only, we had severe challenges. And we therefore set about, and the Minister correctly set about with his team, to see that we need to diversify so that in fact when the next shock comes we will be able to withstand it much better. And that is why the honourable Member in his contribution made a point about these ebbs and flows. That in fact, traditionally we have had two good years and then three bad years and then two good years and then three bad years, et cetera. But with our strategy and what we have entrained for the next couple of years, we should find that we will not have a situation of two good years and three bad years. But that in fact when we do have challenges we will still be able to maintain an acceptable level of employment and generate an acceptable level of revenue for Barbados.

It has taken us a couple of years to reach this stage, but it is all because there is no instant mechanism. We have to go into new markets. It takes time to develop markets, it takes time to develop relationships. It takes time to sell your product, so people get accustomed to your product and get to know your product. And that is why we are seeing the difference. And of course, the whole issue of

airlift. I heard about American Airlines pulling out of New York - a commercial decision made by American Airlines. But you ignore the fact that JetBlue then came and increased the number of flights into Barbados, increased the number of flights not only out of the same New York, but now coming out of Fort Lauderdale, coming out of Boston. One of my best friends just came out of Boston this week and told me that the flight was filled and that in fact, coming to Barbados from Boston now is so much easier because JetBlue is available. We have a strategy. We have a strategy and we are satisfied that we have arrived at the right formula. It took some time, but we are satisfied that we are on the right path.

In addition to Sam Lord's Castle, we accept as a government that tourism alone is not enough to drive the economy the way how we want it to be driven. We have always accepted that. And that is why we have placed additional resources in terms of renewable energy. That is why we want to roll out our revamped sugarcane industry. That is why we are doing more for international business. This Government over the last couple of years has signed more double taxation treaties, has signed more investment protection treaties than the Barbados Labour Party in 14 years. We have made changes to the Mutual Funds Act, to the Companies Act. We have made several new initiatives to attract new business to us. So we understand the importance of new industries. We understand the importance of having growth in the sectors that we now have.

And I am satisfied, sir, the signs are already there. I am satisfied, sir, that we are on a growth path. And we are not on a growth path on one leg only - those sectors that I have referred to, sir, will come along also. And there is a relationship between tourism and international business. When persons come to Barbados for business sometimes, and more often than not, they get accustomed to the place and they come back on holiday. We understand the relationship. Moreover, what we are saying to our people when they go into the marketplace is: you are not to sell one product. In other words, yes, your area may be tourism, but you need to know a little bit about other things so that if someone has an interest in international business, you can say to them, please contact X, or give me your card and I will ensure that this information goes with you. As ministers, when we go out, we spread the gospel of Barbados. Ours is a good story. Ours is a good story, but if you listen to the other side, you would believe that in fact this is some backward, dark place. But the hundreds of thousands of tourists who come here daily tell you a different story.

Again, sir, if I go back to my friends, they are quite happy. They take the minibuses up to Oistins, down to town. They do not feel afraid to be walking around Barbados. They do not. And with good reason. Yes, there

are some challenges, but we should not be giving the impression that all is lost in this country. On the contrary, it is not. So we have a country that, when one compares what is happening in Barbados to many parts of the world, is still safe and stable.

I will end by saying this, sir. What we have to do, given many of our challenges, is to not only look at what is happening in Barbados, but have a regional approach. And the whole issue of crime and security, we have to look at it from a regional perspective. Just last week, I was in Trinidad at a National Security Ministers' conference and that came home even more forcefully. And ironically, that was the same night that we had the unfortunate events in Paris. And this drove home much of what we were saying in terms of how important security is to us in the region and to us as a country because of our dependence on tourism. We are aware of the issues, we are aware of the challenges, and we are aware that with our fiscal challenges we have to be more innovative.

As I speak to you, I believe I am right in saying that even the Royal Barbados Police Force officers are now working 12-hour shifts because, yes, of the challenges, but also because of Independence and the Christmas season coming up. As usual, we have air patrols with the Barbados Defence Force, et cetera. So we are working on our issues. I am satisfied, sir, that over the next year, over the next two years, the people of Barbados will see what we have asked them to sacrifice for over the last couple of years. We are seeing the signs already. In fact, you just have to listen to the other side. You know that we are on the right path. You just have to listen to the nitpicking from the member for St. Michael South East. You know that we are on the right path. You just have to look at the fact that a couple of their senior batsmen do not even bother to turn up for the game at all. You know that we are on the right path. Because if there was something to legitimately criticise us about, there would have been a lot more noise even at this late time of the night. But of course we are on the right path.

So the best the other side can do is nitpick and sound a bit silly, if I might say so - if that is not unparliamentary - when in fact, on the one hand they can say we support this resolution and then spend every reason why it is not the right deal and what should be left on the table, et cetera. We are on the right path. I support this resolution. I look forward, on behalf of the people of St. Philip, to the development of Sam Lord's Castle, so that once again hundreds of Barbadians will be employed at that historic institution. I thank you, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, sir, let me thank members for their contribution to this debate on this resolution. I think this is always the night we should try as

much as possible to bring this to a close. I just want to say a couple of things, Mr. Speaker, sir.

The first is that for me personally, from where I sit and from what I have heard, I think it is fair to conclude that the opposition really does not support this resolution. I mean, they say that they support it, but I believe that what they have said after that - what they have delivered of themselves after they say that they support the resolution - indicates to me really that they don't support the resolution. Really, truthfully.

In fact, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, in a spectacularly poor presentation - it was really one of the worst that I have heard coming from that Honourable Member, and that in itself is a compliment - clearly indicated that, firstly, the Honourable Member did not read the resolution. That was clear. Secondly, as was indicated by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, she was given notes by somebody - I believe it was her leader for the time being - and used those notes, did not read them properly either, because she really did not understand what was going on in the debate, and then sought to go down to a level that did not make us proud tonight at all.

It is really very unfortunate when we get to the stage where we start to try to create a point of contention over the issue of a split in how many workers will be trainees and how many workers will be Barbadian, given the long and very distinguished relationship that we have had with the People's Republic of China. I accept the apology tacitly given by the Honourable Member for St. James Central on behalf of the opposition, in clear rebuke of the diplomatic missteps of his colleague from St. Michael South East. And I do hope that others as well will accept it. But I think it is unfortunate that the Honourable Member had to deliver herself of those particular comments in the way in which she did. It was a clear demonstration of a lack of preparedness for a matter as serious as this.

But, you know, somebody has done a poll for somebody and they have imbued the foolishness that they are the government for next week, and all they have to do is to turn up and criticise the government and they will win 26 seats - and a whole set of rubbish that they have been told all around. So we expect to get more of this as we go forward.

I saw the Honourable Member for St. James Central again repeating on this occasion, quite sadly, a comment made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East - that in fact, based on the statistics of the Central Bank as put out in their last quarterly press release, which I know they all remember, the tourism spend in Barbados has declined year on year in terms of the report given for the first nine months of this year as opposed to the first nine months of last year.

Now, I know better, but for verification I went to the same Central Bank release - both in terms of the body of the text, but then also in the tables of the Central Bank - which indicate quite clearly that travel receipts for 2014 up to September 2014 were \$1 357 000 000, and for the same period this year, \$1 441 200 000. To indicate that the Central Bank statistics say that there was a decline in tourism spend when they clearly indicate that there was an increase in tourism spend either means that the Honourable Member was deliberately trying to mislead the House - and I am going to give the Honourable Member the credit that she was not trying to mislead the House - or that the Honourable Member did not even read the statistics to which she was referring and did not understand them. I think it is more a case of the latter than it was of the former. Very unfortunate.

But what I did not expect is for the Honourable Member for St. James Central to have repeated it, because I know that the Honourable Member knows better and he reads these things and understands. Just as the Honourable Member tried to give the impression - and this is again from that same Honourable Member - that the government might not be able to come up with the money for the counterpart funding for the agreement, when the resolution clearly states how the matter is to be dealt with in relation to the contribution of the government over the life of the construction of the project.

You know, the government does not have to come up with 60 million Barbados dollars in one fell swoop. The contribution is a part contribution matched against the spend - the drawdown of the loan and the spend from the loan for the period under which the construction is done, per month, per quarter, per year, or whatever the case may be. So if \$10 million is spent, then we will pay our part thereof of the \$10 million for the total year until it expires when the project comes to an end.

And for that purpose, if the Honourable Member had done her research rather than rely on the scribbled notes of the Leader of the Opposition, who is not here to deal with the matter, the Honourable Member would have seen that in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure the government - trying to judge the basis on which the agreements will be signed and construction would start - had put a nominal amount in the Estimates of \$5 million, I believe it was, or \$8 million or something like that, to open the account for the period to the end of the current financial year, March 31st, based on what our most generous estimates would be of the likely amount that will be spent given when the agreement will be signed and when construction work will start. If that account goes over the amount prescribed in the Estimates, then we will come for a supplementary to top up the account to match. If it does not, then the amount will be rolled over into the next financial year and we will go on until the project is

complete. Basic stuff that I believe even a first-term parliamentarian in this House of Assembly, with more than two years under her belt, should really be able to master by now.

And then this expressed view - again from some supposed newspaper clipping or wherever it came from - that there is a foreign exchange crisis in Barbados: again, another set of groping in the dark, hoping to throw a dart at some bull's-eye and that somebody out in the community will be listening to it and take it seriously.

We know in Barbados - and I am going to make this point because the truth is that technically, when you really look at it, the structure of the foreign exchange market in Barbados has changed fundamentally from what it was. It is a discourse that has to happen in Barbados; tonight is not the time for it, but I would just make that point. There was a time when we used to look at foreign reserves in Barbados and you would look for the winter season to see a big spike in payments into the reserves and you would say, oh, you had a great tourism season. And then you get the summer - of course, from June onwards you see a decline, and then it gets a little worse between September and October, and then you get another spike.

The truth is that was at a time when there were limited players in the foreign exchange market, where companies did not have large internal accounts, or Treasuries did not hold foreign exchange accounts to do their own transactions, and were not part of conglomerates operating with headquarters in other parts of the region or the world from which their foreign exchange purchases can be made without even bringing money into Barbados. The entire dynamics of the foreign exchange market has changed. So we cannot expect to continue to believe that the same old structural patterns - a bump up in the winter season and a decline at this time - those things are not really happening anymore. In fact, for a very long time, quite a bit of that was masked by substantial external borrowings by the last administration, and -

some by this administration to shore up the reserves. Because what the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East does not know, and I forgive her because she doesn't know, but which I know, the Honourable Member for St. James Central knows, is that there is the difference between the foreign exchange reserves account and the foreign exchange market. The two interplay, but the two are different. There is the open market of transactions that take place on a daily basis between individuals, businesses and financial institutions. That is the foreign exchange market. If at such time there is sufficient money circulating in that market to satisfy the demands, there is no need to call on our reserves. If there are shortages, as there are periodically throughout the year - at certain periods of the year there are shortages, like between the period

September, October, November - you usually have a dip. There is a softness in the market and the open market does not have sufficient foreign exchange in it. Then you call on the central bank to fill the void. That is all. That is how it has always worked and that is how it works now. And then, of course, you go into a more buoyant foreign exchange market period and people are able to then return to the normal patterns.

So when we monitor the reserves of Barbados, we are able to see whether or not there is, on the length, a structural drought or reduction in reserves for which we should get nervous about, or whether it is a seasonal periodic dip in the open market for which the central bank can then top up and let things go. And there has always been, even when we were doing well, queuing for foreign exchange. That happens at certain periods of the year. Indeed in Trinidad and Tobago, where there are billions of dollars in foreign reserves, up to very recently - in fact, probably still now, because they are now trying to solve that problem - there was queuing in Trinidad for foreign exchange to pay for supplies and imports, and businesses and merchants in Trinidad were complaining. The central bank had a whole set of reserves and still they could not get it out of their own commercial banks, because there was a disjuncture between the reserve position held by the central bank and the open market transactions. They are now moving to correct that situation. It was not that Trinidad had a shortage of foreign reserves; they had enough reserves, but the interplay of the market was interrupted for whatever reasons. I am not myself entirely sure what those reasons were, but there were reasons for that. So you have to understand that this is what happens.

So you have big companies - they do not go to any central bank to get any foreign exchange. They make their purchases in Miami out of their own treasuries, and we thank God for that, because if they had to turn up at the central bank, we probably would not have very many reserves, because you would have them there turning up every week. Now, we have benefited - truth be told - on the external account position because of the reduction in oil prices on the global market. So it means that we are paying at least US\$150 million less for fuel this year than we paid for it last year. But with those benefits on the external account side, the balance of payments side, you also have to measure that against the downside on the fiscal revenue side, because when there is a reduction in the value of the purchases of oil and fuel coming into the country, there is a reduction in the revenue you get from it too. Because the value added tax and other taxes and excises attached to that reduce by a commensurate percentage amount. So we get a benefit on the reserve side, but we take a hit on the revenue side. This is just the flow of how the economy runs. So we have to recognise that.

But I would not advise that we get - if there is a challenge with foreign exchange in Barbados that is acute and structural, this Government is not going to hide it, because it is not in our interest to do so. We will say to the country: this is what the position is and these are the various measures that we will have to take to protect that position. We do not fool around with our foreign exchange position. We simply do not do it, because we cannot afford the luxury of fooling around with that. So when you are going to do that type of speech, really think about it before you deliver it, please. It is not a trivial matter.

The next point I want to make, in closing, is a point relative to what the Honourable Member for St. James Central made in terms of the villas. I have heard the argument of the villa people, and the Minister of Tourism can tell you we inherited a situation where that villa sector business - as glorious as it has been for Barbados, and it has contributed a lot in terms of the diversification of the tourism product, employment, the flowing of foreign exchange and so forth - there was a little untidiness about what was going on. In fact, we know we had to amend the legislation because somewhere along the line there was some miscapture of the language in the Act that did not permit legally for the Barbados Tourism Authority, as it was then, and now the Barbados Tourism Product Authority, to have been issuing certificates for villas to be claiming the 25 per cent reduction in the tax. And some sharp officer picked that up and indicated that it was not possible for that to happen. And the issuing of these certificates actually stopped. And we had to go and amend the legislation to ensure that was corrected.

But there is another point. Several of the villas - particularly the villa market in Barbados - a lot of those villas went under construction either under this Government or the last Government, and benefited extensively under the CAP67B concessionary provisions to allow for that sector to develop. So they got tax concessions. When the villas were being constructed, under the Land Tax Act they got a 25 per cent reduction in the value of the application of the tax on what was demanded. So if they were subject to the tax, they would pay 75 per cent by law and get a 25 per cent rebate. They then also benefited downstream from a cap based on the value of the amount that you could tax. So they had three benefits. And I am saying, in the context of what we are doing in terms of tax reform and broadening of the base, I have indicated to the people who operate in that sector: it cannot be unreasonable to say to me that you are going to get a tax benefit - a 25 per cent rebate on your thing and a cap too. That is excessive. And any reasonable person will conclude that is excessive. So we say: if you want to keep the cap, keep the cap, but give up the 25 per cent. Nobody wants to do that. They want all. And I am saying, come on, be reasonable in the circumstances. Be reasonable in the circumstances.

In addition to the fact that we have now added villas to the Tourism Development Act, so the inputs in terms of continual maintenance and upgrade of those properties you also get continuously and permanently tax free. And we are saying, yes, we want to facilitate the tourism business and we are doing it as best as we can, but there is a limit to what we can do because we have a country to run. And you do not run a country off dry talk. You need money. You need cash in the bank, in the Consolidated Fund, so that all the lovely things that the Members of the Opposition want done in their constituency and for their constituents can be done. And I do not think that is an unreasonable position for the Government to adopt in the circumstances.

So those are just the points I wanted to make. This, Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, sir - this is a good deal. This is a good loan. It is an excellent project. We may argue about how long it took, and if it took this long - because remember, for St. Michael South Central, the Honourable Minister of Tourism did not make the point - but when we first contemplated doing the loan with the Chinese, it was ready for Aman. And when we were in a very advanced stage of the negotiations two years ago, the people at Sandals said they wanted to buy the whole property and could do it themselves without the loan from the Chinese. And that is why this particular loan did not come here before. So we decided then that once the Sandals people - who had extreme confidence in Barbados and the Barbados economy, unlike the Members of the Opposition - decided that they were going to proceed, we then looked and said: look, Sam Lord's Castle was there, we were looking for financing and we shifted it over there. And that is why we had to start basically from scratch, because it was a new project in a new area and with new fundamentals. And that is why it took as long as it has taken.

But this is a good loan. This is a good loan. It is one that we can commend to the people of Barbados. It is going to bring investment, jobs, and economic activity to the country. And I think it is something that we should all celebrate, especially in this month of Independence, as we go towards our 49th, and this project is fully up and running. We will be at our 50th year. And I think that this is something that we should be proud of. Full support - and not a left-handed support, full support - should be given to this particular loan. I really would give the House the assurance that perhaps in the next Budget I should remove the tax on mouth muzzles. Anyway, I would not do that. I am not going to go there this time of the night. I am going to leave that alone. So, sir, I commend to the country and to this Honourable Chamber the passage of this resolution. Mr. Speaker, sir.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for the day and I beg to move that the sitting be adjourned until Tuesday, 24th November, in the year of our Lord 2015 at 10 o'clock in the morning.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while correcting and preparing this report. Members are named as in the 2013–2018 Parliament.

Q1. Front matter. The source does not record the PRESENT list or the name of the officiant at Prayers. The Members listed are those identified from the record; the time of meeting, 10.00 a.m., is as stated in the source. Please supply from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Date. The source files for this Sitting are dated Wednesday 18th November (Parts 1 to 4) and Tuesday 17th November (the final Part). The House had adjourned on October 27 until Tuesday, November 17, and the Minutes confirmed on December 15 refer to the meetings of Tuesday, November 17 and November 24. The Sitting is therefore printed as Tuesday, November 17, 2015; it continued after midnight. Please confirm.

Q3. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example '[1.00 a.m.]' and '[01.30 a.m.]' during the morning, '[4.00 a.m.]' in the afternoon and '[12.30 p.m.]' in the evening) and have been omitted.

Q4. Throughout. The source places the words 'I beg to second that, sir' at the start of Mr. SPEAKER's putting of the question on the afternoon suspension. They are printed here as a separate seconding under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconder is not identified. Please confirm.

Q5. Order No. 18, after the luncheon suspension. Part 1 of the source ends with the luncheon suspension and Part 2 begins during the speech of Mr. K. D. Symmonds ('And I wanted to share a few thoughts...'). The resumption of the sitting and the Chair's call of Mr. K. D. Symmonds are not recorded, and the opening of his speech may be missing. Please check against the recording.

Q6. Order No. 18, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce. The source has Hon. J. D. E. Boyce commending 'the Honourable Minister, the Member for Christ Church South'. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce is himself the Member for Christ Church South; the Minister who introduced the Bill, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, is the Member for Christ Church East. Corrected.

Q7. Order No. 18, Mr. J. D. Paul. Headed 'HON. G. P. IAN GOODING-EDGHILL, J.P., M.P.' in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for St. Michael West Central, and the speaker refers to 'the constituency of St.

Michael West Central', so the speech is printed under Mr. J. D. PAUL. Please confirm.

Q8. Order No. 18, Mr. J. D. Paul. The source reads 'the Minister of Finance – the Member for St. Michael North'. The Minister of Finance, Hon. C. P. Sinckler, was the Member for St. Michael North West; corrected.

Q9. Order No. 18, Committee. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed. The Committee stage is condensed to the Official Report formulae; Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed without amendment. The Minister moved that the Bill be cited as the 'National Conservation Validation of Fees Act, 2015'; it is printed with the title read by the Clerk, the National Conservation Commission Validation of Fees Bill, 2015. Please confirm the short title.

Q10. Order No. 21, between Parts 3 and 4. Part 3 of the source ends during the speech of Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw and Part 4 begins in mid-sentence ('Forward the explanation that the reason why only 40% of the workforce...'). Part of her speech may be missing at this point. Please check against the recording.

Q11. Order No. 21, the Chair. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw addresses 'Mr. Speaker' at the start of Part 4 and 'Madam Deputy Speaker' shortly afterwards; the change of Chair is not recorded. At the end of Part 4 the source again heads the Chair 'MR. SPEAKER', although the Member who rose immediately before addressed 'Madam Deputy Speaker'. Please confirm who was in the Chair.

Q12. Order No. 21, points of order. In the exchanges on the points of order raised by the Prime Minister and Hon. R. L. Sealy, the source runs the words of one speaker into the heading of the next ('Madam Speaker, I have not read –', 'to what I am saying and I hope –', 'you are reading from', 'in such a manner'). These fragments have been restored to the speakers to whom they belong.

Q13. Dinner suspension. The two motions for the dinner suspension are headed 'SPEAKER UNCERTAIN – REVIEW' and 'HON. RALPH A. THORNE, M.P.' in the source; the latter was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. The first speaker describes himself as 'the Member for Christ Church –' and the Chair then called the Member for Christ Church South, the Leader of the House, so both are printed under Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE. Please confirm.

Q14. Adjournment. The words ‘I beg to second that, sir’ stand at the end of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce’s motion in the source. They are printed as a separate seconding under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconder is not identified. Please confirm.

Q15. Resumption, Mr. SPEAKER. Mr. SPEAKER’s opening words begin mid-sentence in the source (‘– when suspension was taken on Government Business Order Number 21’). Part of the record may be missing at this point. Please check against the recording.

Q16. Order No. 21, Mr. K. D. Symmonds and Hon. A. D. Brathwaite. The source reads ‘St. Lawrence Castle’ three times where the debate concerns Sam Lord’s Castle. Left as in the source; please check against the recording.

Q17. Order No. 21, before Hon. A. D. Brathwaite. The Chair’s line reads ‘Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. Yes, I remember.’ in the source and is printed as ‘Thank you.’ The call of the Attorney-General is not recorded.

Q18. Order No. 21, before Hon. C. P. Sinckler. The Chair’s call reads ‘Yes, Honourable Member. Cynthia, I do not move.’ in the source; the words after the call are unclear and have been omitted. Please check against the recording.

Q19. Order No. 21, Hon. C. P. Sinckler. The source reads ‘the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central does not know, and I forgive her’. In 2015 that seat was held by Hon. R. L. Sealy; the Member meant, whose figures the Minister was answering, is Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, Member for St. Michael South East. Corrected.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. The Minutes of October 20 and 27, 2015 were confirmed. Hon. C. P. Sinckler laid the Sugar Industry Workers Provident Fund Order 2015, the Occupational Benefits Amendment Regulations 2015, a loan and grant agreement with the Latin American Development Bank (CAF) and the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited Annual Report 2014, and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce laid the audited financial statements and annual reports of the Lodge School. Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 were suspended.

Under Order No. 18 the Minister of Environment and Drainage, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, moved the second reading of the National Conservation Commission Validation of Fees Bill, 2015, explaining that certain fees, including those at Farley Hill, the Esplanade at Bay Street

and Independence Square, had been charged and collected without legal authority. He described the Commission’s five major parks, its workforce of just over 600, the clearing of over 40 000 cubic metres of sargassum seaweed and the purchase of two pieces of equipment at \$615 000. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw supported the Bill but raised the condition of parks and beaches, including Folkestone, and the effect of budget cuts. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman spoke of the economic opportunities in parks and tourism.

After the luncheon suspension Mr. K. D. Symmonds proposed that the cost of clearing overgrown lots be attached to owners’ land tax bills. Hon. S. A. Lashley welcomed the prompt correction of the anomaly, Miss C. Y. Forde called for action against littering and illegal dumping, and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce proposed extending the Adopt-a-Kilometre idea into villages. Mr. E. G. Hinkson, its chairman in the late 1990s, said the Commission had been used for political purposes and criticised the dismissal of its workers. Hon. C. P. Sinckler replied that Mr. Hinkson had presided over the Commission while fees were collected without legal validation, and Mr. Hinkson rose on a point of order. Mr. J. D. Paul spoke of parks in his constituency, and Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe undertook that the Commission would look into the matters raised. The Bill passed through Committee without amendment and was read a third time and passed. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce gave notice of a Resolution on borrowing from the Export-Import Bank of China, and the sitting was suspended until 6.30 p.m.

On the resumption, under Order No. 21, Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the Resolution to approve the borrowing of up to US\$170 million from the Export-Import Bank of China, to be on-lent to Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. to finance 85 per cent of the cost of the Sam Lord’s Castle Hotel project. He said the project would cost \$200 million in all, the loan carried interest of 2.5 per cent, tourism was growing at about 15 per cent this year, the hotel would have 450 rooms under the Wyndham brand, and an escrow account would allow its returns to service the loan.

Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw supported the loan but questioned why only 40 per cent of the workforce would be Barbadian, and argued from Central Bank figures that tourism spending and foreign reserves had declined. The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart, rose on points of order that she was reading from a newspaper, and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER directed her to continue. On a point of order by Hon. R. L. Sealy, Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER agreed that speaking of figures being fiddled was unparliamentary, and Hon. C. P. Sinckler said there had been no change in the methodology of tourism statistics. Hon. R. L. Sealy defended the 60/40 labour arrangement, spoke of new airlift and hotel projects, and said the 15 per cent counterpart funding was in the Estimates. The sitting was then suspended for dinner until 9.45 p.m.

On the resumption, Mr. K. D. Symmonds, Member for St. James Central, stated that the Barbados Labour Party supported the Resolution, recalling that a Barbados Labour Party administration had secured Approved Tourism Destination status from China and advanced the idea of a direct air link. He said the 2 per cent growth projected in June had become 0.3 of a percentage point in the Central Bank's report, that tourism was the only sector not in decline, and that crime and the recent United States travel advisory threatened the planned hotel developments. Hon. R. L. Sealy, on a point of order, said his ministerial statement on concessions had applied to the whole sector and not only to Sandals. Mr. Symmonds went on to note that a \$500 million China-Caribbean investment fund available in 2007 had become a \$20 billion fund, asked why the Government had taken so long, supported the concern of the Member for St. Michael South East about the 60 to 40 ratio of Chinese to Barbadian labour, and said the removal of the \$60 000 cap on land tax on rental villas was reducing villa rentals and employment.

The Attorney-General, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, Member for St. Philip South, described his visit to China with the Chief Executive Officer of Barbados Tourism Investment, where Barbados had insisted that Barbadian workers and companies be employed. He said about 1 000 Barbadians would be employed directly and another 3 300 affected indirectly, so the 60/40 split was no reason to leave the deal on the table, and he expected the hotel to open in 2018 or early 2019. Mr. Symmonds, on a point of order, said he had asked the Government to facilitate, not

provide, nightlife and restaurants. Hon. A. D. Brathwaite spoke on crime, youth unemployment, the travel advisory and regional security. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, on a point of order, denied that she had given young men a tent after a police and National Housing Corporation raid, saying the tent was for a children's event. The Attorney-General also referred to JetBlue flights from New York, Fort Lauderdale and Boston and to the Government's double taxation and investment protection treaties.

Replying, the Minister of Finance, Hon. C. P. Sinckler, said the Opposition's support was not genuine. Citing the Central Bank's release, he said travel receipts to September had risen from \$1 357 000 000 in 2014 to \$1 441 200 000 in 2015. He explained that the Government's counterpart contribution would be paid against drawdowns of the loan rather than as \$60 million at once, distinguished the foreign exchange market from the reserves, and said Barbados was paying at least US\$150 million less for fuel this year. On villas, he said owners could not keep both the 25 per cent rebate and the cap on land tax. He said the loan had first been prepared for the Aman project, until Sandals decided to buy that property without the Chinese loan, and was then moved to Sam Lord's Castle, which had to start from scratch.

The Resolution was passed after midnight. On the motion of the Leader of the House, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, the House adjourned until Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 10.00 a.m.