
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2018 – 2022

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, March 27, 2020

Pursuant to the Adjournment, the Honourable the House met on Friday, March 27, 2020, at 10 a.m. at the Parliament of Barbados located at Worthing Corporate Centre.

PRESENT

His Honour A.E. HOLDER, LL.B., (Speaker) His Honour G.A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed. (Deputy Speaker) Hon. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C. (Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)

Hon. R.St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of International Business and Industry)

Hon. Miss MIA A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment)

Bishop the Hon. J.J.S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P. (Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs)

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs)

Hon. T.A. PRESCOD, B.A. (Minister of Environment and National Beautification)

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Lt. Col. the Hon. J.D. BOSTIC, MVO, B.A. (Hons.), (Minister of Health and Wellness)

Hon. E.G. HINKSON, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C, LL.M., (Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. D.G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A. (Dist.), (Minister of Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Commerce)

Hon. Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.), (Minister of Education, Technological and Vocational Training and Leader of Government Business)

Dr. the Hon. W.F. DUGUID, J.P., B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S, F.D.R.C.S., (Minister of Transport, Works and Maintenance)

Hon. W.A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Hons.), (Minister of Energy and Water Resources)

Hon. Ms. C.S.V. HUSBANDS, B.A., (Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Trade)

Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN, B.Sc. (Minister in the Ministry of Finance)

Hon. Miss. M.K-A. CADDLE, M.A., (Minister in the Ministry of Economic Affairs)

Hon. C.E. JORDAN, B.A., (Minister of Labour and Social Partnership Relations)

Hon. K.D.M. HUMPHREY, B.A., (Minister of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy)

Hon. I.A. WEIR (Minister of Agriculture and Food Security)

Hon. A.R. FORDE (Minister of Youth and Community Empowerment)

Hon. C.McD. GRIFFITH (Minister in the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)

Hon. P.R. PHILLIPS (Minister in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Maintenance)

Hon. J.A. KING (Minister of the Creative Economy, Culture and Sports)

Mr. G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL

Dr. S.E. BROWNE

Mr. R.A. THORNE, Q.C.

Mr. N.G.H. ROWE

Prayers were taken by the Reverend Mark Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is in Session.

PAPERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. The Directors' Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services

Limited for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2018.

2. The Loan Contract No. 4987/0OCBA between the Government of Barbados and the Inter-American Development Bank, Sustainable Development Policy Programme.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, February 24, 2020 and Friday, March 20, 2020, are to be deferred.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the said Minutes be deferred.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the aforementioned Minutes be deferred was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of the Meetings held on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 and Tuesday, February 18, 2020, are to be confirmed.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the aforementioned Minutes be confirmed.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the aforementioned Minutes be confirmed was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Emergency Management Bill, 2020, be read for the first time.

Hon. Miss. C. Y. FORDE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the aforementioned Bill be read for the first time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the First Reading of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

The question that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2020, be read for the first time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the mentioned Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of the day's Sitting was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the Order of the day.

ORDER NO. 15

To move the Second Reading of the Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, when we were last in this Chamber a week ago a considerable amount of the Chamber's time was spent in discussing the impact of COVID-19 on Barbados. We also looked at the impact of COVID-19 across the globe. Sir, at that time we were focusing on what the Government would do in the event that we found ourselves suffering the worst of this disease. Sir, it would be difficult to describe to this Chamber the amount of time, sheer man hours, that has been spent in the planning for and management of our response to COVID-19 since it became obvious that it was headed our way. We have had lots of sleepless nights, much of it because of the fact that a lot is not known about the disease and almost daily the parameters were changing. However, Sir, we recognise that notwithstanding any uncertainty, there is one thing that we could control, is how we prepare our Government, how we prepare our country and how we prepare our citizens. The overriding consideration at all times has been keeping the citizens of Barbados safe. While it may appear to some that we have been focusing on economic issues, while it might appear to some that we have been putting a lot of emphasis on business continuity, on the economy and replacing and so on, replacing the revenue from tourism all of which are important things, Sir. The overriding obligation of this Government has always been to keep Barbadians safe.

Mr. Speaker, every year we prepare for a hurricane season. We have prepared in years when hurricanes came and we have prepared in years when hurricanes did not come. Certainly, since this Administration came to power, we have spent a lot of time trying to put things in place in case a hurricane came. Every year at the start of a hurricane season the huge envelope of emergency orders are presented to me as Attorney General for me to certify, just in case we needed them. As we prepared for this year's hurricane season, Mr. Speaker, we had to ask ourselves, will we have guaranteed water supply? Will we have a guaranteed supply of electricity? What are we going to do about food? What are we going to do about health care? Ironically Sir, every single one of those issues that we raise and are also planned for associated with the fallout of a hurricane, we now find ourselves employing them, not for physical hurricane but a hurricane now called COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying to this Chamber that under the Constitution of Barbados, the Governor General can declare a state of emergency and trigger powers under the Emergency Powers Act. That is always available to us. However, historically, and when I say historically, I have to reflect on other places, because in living memory I do not know that we would have had a state of emergency post World War II, and when I say in living memory, I reflected last week that the average age of this Chamber is probably around was 30, but in the last seven days some of us have age an awful lot, so I will give it 45 today. However, Sir, none of us can reflect on a time when we have ever actually had to trigger those emergency powers. As we have prepared for this COVID-19, we had to begin by determining what our philosophical stance was going to be. How are we approaching COVID-19? It came became evident very early that because we started early we had an opportunity to project and had an opportunity to plan and say, "if this happens then that is what we will do, if that happens then you will change". Hence it became an exercise in managing our response.

Although for some it may just be more....., a play on words just nothing of substance, as an Administration we felt that we needed to look at this emergency in the context of a public health emergency and trigger our responses in accordance with that which we have put in statute and that which we have planned for so long. That is why we are here today Sir. We are here today to amend the Emergency Management Act to make provision for that Act to be extended to public health emergencies. During the course of this short presentation I will mention a few other things, everybody is waiting to hear what this curfew is all about and I hope to be able to clarify any doubt in people's minds.

I want to begin by pointing out that in an event of a hurricane, it is the Director of Emergency Management who is in charge. In the event of a flood, storm or

earthquake, any those physical natural disasters, the Director of Emergency management is in charge. However, this amendment, even though we are going to be working on the COVID issues within the context of the Emergency Management Act, we have been careful to make it clear that in the context of a public health emergency, the person who is in charge is the Chief Medical Officer. That is important Sir, I believe that it may not be well known, the old politicians used to say that the Chief Medical Officer is the most powerful person in Barbados, more powerful than any Prime Minister, Attorney General or any Member of Cabinet, because the Chief Medical Officer literally has the power to shut down any institution in this country on the basis of health concerns. That is the first point that I wish to make that even though we are locating our management of this situation in the context of the disaster, the Emergency Management Act which is directed towards physical and natural disasters, we are making sure that in this context, as long as it is a public health emergency the powers of the Chief Medical Officer remain supreme.

Sir I do not think that this Chamber needs to hear an exposition on COVID. You have certainly had the benefit of one for much of last week and you need only to turn on any of the international news channels in the morning and you will have a constant diet of COVID related news. What we can say Sir, is that we believe the time has come for Barbados to trigger certain measures, and I will give more details on those as we go ahead. Before I get into those things, I would like to laud the efforts of this Government at managing this issue in a collaborative way. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for so graciously agreeing that we could do this legislation in all of its stages both in the Lower House and in the other place, while we have the power of numbers, we begin by recognising that there is one Barbados and that COVID does not recognise political parties or party colours. A person who wears red will get it as easily as a person who wears blue and as easily as a person who wears green or grey-green. Hence Sir, COVID sees no political or geographical barriers. COVID recognises no change in status from poor to rich or rich to poor. From what we are hearing these days, certainly young people are catching it that we are beginning to think it does not even recognise the hitherto much-touted 70-year age limit. The reports are that people of all ages are not only contracting it but are absolutely dying from it. Every step of the way in this process Sir, the Government of Barbados has collaborated with all side politically and we have collaborated with all interested parties. We have collaborated with the private sector, the workers' unions, the trade groupings, the Church, everybody has had an opportunity to weigh in on the many issues and as they have weighed in Sir, as a Government, we have tried to balance all of the competing interests. The overriding thing at all times has been keeping Barbadians safe.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister has ably led this exercise for personal reasons, she has indicated to the country that she will be scarce for a day or two and in that regard, I wish to thank the chaplain for offering that very kind prayer on behalf of our political leader. She knows that she is certainly in our prayers and certainly in the prayers of Bishop Joe, all of us praying for an eventful medical treatment and a quick and full recovery. The Honourable Prime Minister is not physically here but we expect to have her back with us within a very short order. However, the fact that the Honourable Prime Minister is not here does not at all mean that this exercise is bereft of leadership. I believe that the efforts that we have put into managing this whole thing over the last few weeks demonstrates clearly that we have a solid vision for how we should deal with it.

Sir, let us come to today. Last night, the Honourable Prime Minister announced that with 24 COVID-19 cases as at that time, there was really little point waiting for the artificial mathematical exercise of the 25th, we could have, but that would have been of little point. The tests are done the afternoon, I think of the day, and then they become available the following morning. On Monday morning we knew that from all the tests we had done on the Sunday gone, we had zero new cases. On the Tuesday we knew that it would be recorded a mere one case for the Monday. On the Wednesday, we knew that we had recorded three cases for the day before. Yesterday, we knew we recorded a further three cases for the day before. There is a march that COVID-19 is making Sir, into the population of Barbados that is undeniable and at this point we have no mechanism to halt it. There was no point waiting until we hit the magic number and say well let us wait until tomorrow and then we get 25 we will then trigger. That would have been farcical and foolish. So, having consulted with the Chief Medical Officer, all of the officers with the Ministry of Health, just about everybody under the sun and having got the approval of Cabinet the Honourable Prime Minister last night announced that Barbados will be under curfew.

Now, Sir, we understand that there is some confusion. I think that confusion arises only because in the short time that the Honourable Prime Minister spoke to the country it was evident that she did not intend to make clear all of the dynamics of the situation. In fact, she made it quite clear that others would speak about that. People seem to have hastened on to what the Honourable Prime Minister said which, to me, was quite clear, and determined that it absolutely meant this and it absolutely meant that this is a challenging time for us. It is not a time to be blaming anybody or any of those things; it is a time to make clear exactly what the curfew requirement is. I remind you that the overriding objective is to keep Barbadians safe. Sir, it is not a difficult equation at all. What we do know is that in order to stem the spread of COVID-19 we have to limit

human contact. If the cameras in this Chamber panned across the Chamber it would look as though Parliament is scanty today. My mother would say a rat could run through it.

The reason Sir, because our members are absent it is because we recognise that in order to stem the spread of COVID-19 even though we are doing our solemn and sworn duty as Parliamentarians we are under a duty to accept the ratios of physical distancing. So we have determined we have to be here; we cannot do Parliament by video link; so we have to be here but Sir, we are sitting in every other chair. Yesterday, we had Cabinet by zoom, so all of us stayed in our respective homes and offices but participated effectively in a full Cabinet meeting and made the proper decision to run this country in exactly the same as if we had sat in the Cabinet room in Bay Street. The point is Sir, in everything we do we have to recognise what our objective is limiting human contact. We can stem the spread of COVID by limiting human contact. What that meant for us Sir, was that we had to make some decisions about how Barbados would operate. So, how do we limit human contact? Well the schools are closed, so that means that the students are not in schools and the teachers are not in schools. This decision and I think we have to make this clear, this decision means that with the exceptions of a few instances all businesses are closed in Barbados from Saturday 28th March, 2020 at 8.00 p.m. until April 14th, 2020 at 8.00 p.m. as well. The first day that Barbados will reopen fully then will be April 15th, 2020, all businesses, Sir. I could probably repeat that another ten times just for emphasis. The reasons we are saying all businesses are closed is because we need Barbadians to stay away from each other. If we ask Barbadians to stay at home then there are consequences, so businesses of necessity have to be closed during this period. Sir, I have got probably about 400 WhatsApp messages and as many calls and everybody in here has got I am sure many of the same or more. Let us look at the logic of it. What will be the point Sir, of keeping businesses open so their employees come to work and their customers come and go and those customers may or may not catch a bus to come and go and then have a requirement, which would say that grocery stores are open and so on. We will in effect not be achieving anything, Sir. This is not a curfew to maintain law and order if you have a curfew to maintain law and order place shuts down at night and you go about your business during the day.

This is a period during which we are going to severely and in a compulsory way, restrict human activity; plain and simple. With the exceptions of a few businesses and I will tell you what those are, all businesses are closed. Hairdressers are closed, Sir. The nail salons, computer stores, the place that rents tables and chairs, the construction companies, the manufacturers of paints and plastics and all of those things are all closed. The reason is because we want to limit human contact of your employees

and consumers. There are two riders to that. Essential services remain open. I think that is logical.

Sir, essential services are defined for this purpose as follows:

- The medical profession
- The paramedical profession
- Staff of pharmaceutical agencies
- Staff of hospitals
- Clinics and pharmacies
- Person employed are engaged as caregivers

Let me make this clear. If you have a maid or some other kind of domestic worker, that does not apply. It is not an essential service but if you are a caregiver, so a night nurse for an elderly person with Alzheimer or someone who comes in during the day to provide home help. It is not your maid but someone who is a caregiver; we have decided to treat those as an essential service.

Sir, let me say that one thing about a Government is that they must govern and make decisions. We cannot be bound by other people's strictures. We recognize that in Barbados we have a large number of elderly people who rely on somebody to come in and take care of them. It is often a family member. Often, it is not even a business. It is businesses that we are closing. If it is not a business, then the law would say that is not covered. It is not prohibited. The point is, we want to make it clear that caregivers are going to be entitled to move around at night or day.

It continues as follows:

- Law enforcement officers
- Defence Force officers
- Customs officers
- Prison officers
- Security services

Again, let me offer an explanation. During the curfew period, you are not allowed to be on the road. Businesses will be closed. It is important and we have made it quite clear that businesses have to be responsible for their own security. At this time, Sir, we cannot deploy members of the BDF or the police to be guarding people's warehouses and office buildings. This is not what we are about. They still have to take care and pay due regard to

their own circumstances. There are a number of security companies that monitor the alarm systems and have response teams. Companies that provide security guards are all considered essential services and will be allowed to move around, and so their business night or day.

It continues as follows:

- Disaster management services
- Firefighting services
- Provision of electricity, telecommunications, media and broadcasting services

We consider that to be an essential service. We cannot afford for electricity to be down no matter what. We cannot afford for our telecommunications systems to be affected no matter what. Equally, at this point in time, the role of the media and the broadcasting companies is more critical than ever because where there is a vacuum on information, then fake news and rumours will spread. Therefore, it is important to ask that media and broadcasting remain available to work night and day, so that news whether it is good or bad will reach the Barbadian public and the international community.

It continues as follows:

- Provision of transport services, whether by aircraft, ship, motor vehicle or public service vehicle

We think that is fairly self-evident. It is still important for transport services to be available.

It continues as follows:

- The operation of the airport and seaport

There are a lot of people that are saying we need to close this and that. It is so short-sighted, Sir. We are trying to ensure that we have at least six months' supply of medication for Barbados; any kind of medication. We have instructed the Barbados Drug Service to stock-pile medication because we do not know where this is going. I understand that there are 134 medications that are short in the USA. We want to make sure that Barbadians are not in a position where they have to suffer because these things are not available.

Sir, if we do not make them here and we do not, we have to bring them in. Plain and simple. There are things that we need that will have to come in by ship. There are things that we need that will have to come in by plane. So the airport and seaport are essential services. When we talk about the services, obviously we mean the people who are employed in those services too.

It continues as follows:

- The collection, storing, purification or distribution of water for use by the public or any section of the public

We are saying to Barbadians to wash your hands but there has to be water. This is a special plea for St.

Joseph and St. Thomas if you do not mind, Sir. Let us get some water.

It continues as follows:

- The collection, storage, treatment and disposal of sewage, garbage or refuse

This is also an essential service, so they are going to be allowed to work night or day.

It continues as follows:

- The removal, handling or burial of deceased persons or disposal of dead animals.

This is self-explanatory. All of those businesses, enterprises and all of that activity that I have just mentioned are unaffected by this curfew order. Those entities will continue to function as per usual. What do I mean by “as per usual” as far as time is concerned? We still expect that wherever possible, those entities will try to scale back the number of people that are engaged because at all times we want to stem the spread of this disease. We start out with all businesses are closed but essential services are able to move around. Of course, you recognise that there are still some necessary services that Barbadians will be entitled to access.

I will go through the list with you but the principle is that during daylight hours, Barbadians still need to go to the supermarket and get groceries. They still need to go to the pharmacists and get their medication. Once you get to that point, then you recognise there are some entities in Barbados that are actually producing food for our consumption. During this two-week period, the following enterprises are going to be allowed to operate and Barbados Government Information Service is going to publish this list, but I am going to go through it fairly carefully now: abattoirs, butcher shops and fish markets are going to be allowed to operate between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Now let me make it clear, the Government of Barbados is not telling a company when it should open or when it should close. We want you to use your good sense, we want you to employ skeleton staff, but what we are saying is that we are setting the beginning limit and the closing limit. An enterprise that is allowed to function may say, having regard to the demand and they having regard to all of these issues, we see that we can open at 8.00 a.m., but frankly we

are going to open at 10.00 a.m. We see that we can close at 5.00 p.m. but we believe it is better to close at 2.00 p.m. so this is not a case at all where we are saying that you have to open at X time or Y time, we are saying the between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. abattoirs can function. They open whenever they want, they have social distancing and physical distancing, but that is the window within which they can operate. The reason for this window should be obvious. The curfew ends at 6.00 a.m. and people need to be able to get from their homes into the workplace. The workplace needs to be able to function as an abattoir, for example, but the important thing is that we ensure that there is a supply of food for Barbadians and that Barbadians can access those supplies.

Sir, bakeries will be allowed to open between 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. Farms will be allowed to open between 5.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. Pharmaceutical manufacturers, manufacturers of juices, soft drinks and dairy products, food processors and food distributors, will be allowed to open between the hours of 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Banks, credit unions and other financial institutions excluding insurance companies, will be allowed to open between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. so we are not saying that a bank has to open at 9.00 a.m. and close at 5.00 p.m. They could open at 10.00 a.m. and close at 2.00 p.m., that is up to them but we are seeing the limits between which you can operate, do business and interface with the public.

Cleaning services will be able to operate between the hours of 7.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.

Sir, restaurants will be able to operate between 11.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., but only for the purposes of drive-through or take away so do not let us have any confusion. Any restaurant, whether you are a fast food restaurant or a fine dining restaurant or a cook shop, whatever you are, you will operate between 11.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. but you are not to allow dining on the premises. You can do drive-through so Burger King Drive-Through, Chefette Drive-Through, KFC Drive-Through, you can go in, purchase and take away, but you are not allowed to dine on the premises and your times of operation are severely limited, 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Naturally, Sir, we need to have fuel to power our vehicles, fuel to run the turbines, to run our generators so fuel manufacturers, fuel storage facilities, and fuel distributors, will be allowed to operate between 7.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Gas stations will be allowed to operate between 7.00 a.m. and I think that was 5.00 p.m., but it is 7.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m.

Sir, delivery services have become very popular, especially now that people are physically distancing and companies are now making quite a bit of money delivering food, delivering groceries and so on, so delivery services

relating to the delivery of food groceries and pharmaceuticals will be able to operate between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.

We have had questions about hotels, Sir. Hotels and villas are going to be allowed to operate for the entire 24-hour period. That is clear. Hotels and villas will operate for the entire 24-hour period, however, gaming rooms, spas, gyms, discos, restaurants, other than for take away service and room service, golf courses, lawn tennis/squash sports, all of those are ancillary services are to be closed. There is no point having a hotel opened trying to ensure physical distancing, but they can all sit down and have nice dinners, lunches or breakfasts and go to play squash and all of those things, Sir. They are allowed to be open but all of those recreational activities that are allied and on the premises are to be closed. Now, there is logic about that that you cannot avoid. If you close a hairdressing salon on High Street, there is no reason why you should allow the hairdressing salon that is in the lobby of a hotel to operate; plain and simple. Is that okay? Hotels are allowed to accept guests, but all of those ancillary recreational services are excluded.

We have Portvale Sugar Factory, Sir, which runs three shifts. Portvale Sugar Factory will be excluded from the curfew. Private veterinary services, as needed, will be allowed. Obviously, animals in distress, things of that sort, people have to be able to have their animals tended to. Sir, in the private sector, all businesses are to be closed except for those that I have just mentioned so there is no point in calling. There is no point in reaching out to your Member of Parliament (MP). No point calling a Congressman. You are closed.

Now, the statute does give the opportunity, Sir, for exceptions to be made other than these. Now let us make it clear, none of us have a claim to be all-knowing and all-seeing and we recognise that when we state a list like this, there is always the possibility of something else that feeds into the process so we have to make provision for exemptions and we already have an exemption in relation to construction. Construction is closed. If you building a step, a guard wall, a house, a factory, work ceases during that period. I hope I am making myself clear, however, the Government is under an imperative to get Harrison's Point open to receive Covid-19 victims within the next week or two, so I have already indicated to the Minister of Health that those construction companies that are working at Harrison's Point to get the Naval Base ready, they will be given an exemption. That is a matter of national interest. If John Browne Construction Company is given an exemption to work in St. Lucy, that does not extend to him finishing the house in Durants that he started week before. That site is closed. However, he can work at Harrison Point.

Construction supplies, hardware stores are closed -- all of them. However, for the limited purpose of supplying goods to the Harrison Point operation they will be allowed to be opened. Okay? I hope that is clear. Let me put it another way: The hardware store in Lower Estate or up Christ Church will be closed. However, if for Harrison Point a particular item or series of items are required that they produce, we will allow the exemption to extend to that, but it is not to come and open the store, it is to go to your warehouse, select the goods and get them delivered to Harrison Point. Anything beyond that is a breach of the order and will attract the severest of penalties.

Now, I think that if we view it in the context of saying that in order to prevent the spread of the disease from one person to another, what we are doing and why we are doing it will become absolutely logical. There is the possibility that we may not have contemplated everything but in exceptional circumstances we are going to grant exemptions. Okay?

Now, [regarding] the matter of the public service, it is important for the country to continue to operate with some level of normalcy and that requires the Government to be able to function. But every single ministry has been mandated to come up with a plan which would see skeleton staff operating from the ministerial office, so during this period, for example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we can expect that the courts will be closed unless you have a matter before the duty judge, or unless any judge wants to conduct a hearing or part of a hearing by his own, and I encourage that. So the courts will be opened to some extent but it is obvious that we cannot have the courts functioning as a total enterprise.

Now the Office of the Solicitor-General has about 18 lawyers but we do not anticipate that during that period there will be any reason for them to come to court because the courts are closed with that proviso that I have just mentioned. So [that] every ministry, including my own, has been asked to come up with a plan to make sure that selected ministries are staffed by a skeleton number of individuals with the other officers being allowed to work from home. Now, working from home is something that has been touted by many over the last few years. We have been talking about flexi time, using computers and so on and I have to say that I hope that at the end of this COVID-19 epidemic that we would actually have found ways to change the way in which we do things. But the point is, Government departments are going to be open but not fully staffed -- open and not fully staffed -- and even then not all Government departments will be up and running.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me go through the list for you: The following Government ministries, departments, and statutory corporations shall open between the hours of 9:00 -- 2.00 p.m. The Office of the Attorney-General, the

Registrar of the Supreme Court, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the National Assistance Board, the Child Care Board, any of the Government laboratories, the National Disabilities Unit, National Insurance Department, the Treasury, the Central Bank of Barbados, Post Office, Civil Aviation Department, Cabinet Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of the Public Service, Ministry of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, and Public Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Commerce Department in the Ministry of Commerce, Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., Central Purchasing, Barbados Meteorological Services, Barbados Statistical Department, Barbados Revenue Authority, Barbados Licensing Authority, Urban Development Commission, Rural Development Commission, Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, and the Barbados Agriculture Management Company. Also, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Plant Quarantine and Veterinary Services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have tried to identify those key Government departments that even in a shutdown they would likely be a requirement for them to work, so that, for example, Central Purchasing still has to ensure that commodities reach wherever they need to reach. Central Purchasing, I am sure, is the agency that will supply goods and obtain services to many of Government departments. The Commerce Department, we are concerned about the possibility of price gouging and so the Commerce Department needs to function. But at this point in time except there is something exceptional happening the other departments, really, we do not see them needing to work. So these Government departments are considered to be critical and will work from 9:00 -- 2.00 p.m. but even as they work they will be expected to operate with skeleton staff.

The Ministry of the Public Service is currently engaged in finalising a work-from-home programme, so that the fact that you are not required to come to work does not mean that you do not work. So there are individuals who because of the work they do would be encouraged to work from home. I would not expect, Sir that a filing clerk would be told to work from home. To do what? That would be illogical but on the other hand an economist who is doing a research paper or who is trying to finalise certain figures ought or maybe to do some of that from home.

I am not here trying to say who should or should not, that is a matter for each ministry and each department to resolve, but the firm expectation is that ministries would be staffed by skeleton numbers while the other individuals would work from home. So I believe that the Clerk of Parliament will stay home and the Deputy Clerks, because Parliament is not seen unless we have to come back within that period as being one of these Government departments

that have to function. But we may have to come back, so do not get too comfortable.

Obviously things like meteorological services that is a daily requirement and we cannot function without that, so I think that if you look through it... I mean, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, every single day the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is at the forefront of helping us to deal with this COVID-19 issue because much of what we need is not available here and it can only be obtained with the intervention and assistance of foreign governments. It has been disclosed that we have requested the Government of Cuba for assisting with sending nurses, so that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has constantly be dealing with that process. As we deal with diplomatic issues across the world, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has to be on point.

On the other hand, though, the Foreign Trade component is not seen as being a part that needs to be at the ministry every day, so they may well be asked by the ministry to work from home.

I hope that clarifies what our expectation is in terms of the private sector and the public sector. Sir, of course, I remind you that we have never gone this way before. We have no experience with curfews, happily, and I hope that in the next 150 years we do not have to have any experience with one either. As we have worked through this we recognise that there are a number of other things which we need to make clear. Again, the overriding objective is to compile physical distancing and to reduce human interaction, so it is important for me to make it clear that under this particular directive, except for the conduct of funeral services and weddings, all churches and places of religious worship including mosques and synagogues, shall be closed.

Sir, I am going to repeat that. Except for the conduct of funeral services and weddings, all churches and places of religious worship including mosques and synagogues shall be closed. Sir, we have determined that even though we are going to permit weddings, we have provided that at any wedding the numbers have to be severely limited, so you are limited to the bride, the bridegroom, the official witnesses and the marriage officer. We are going to allow you to get married. Marriage is an important institution. If you have to get married, you should get married, but the numbers are severely limited to the bride, the bridegroom, the official witnesses and the marriage officer.

Asides.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: The courts are closed, so you cannot get divorced.

Asides.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, in relation to funerals these will be limited to no more than ten mourners, one officiant and a funeral director and necessary staff. Let me repeat that: Funerals are limited to no more than ten mourners, one officiant, the funeral director and necessary staff. Again, Sir, there is a funeral in my constituency which I want to attend and I know that the person was well loved and it would be a big funeral, but we are enforcing the requirement for eliminating these kinds of gatherings. In the interest of not spreading COVID, we are saying no more than ten mourners, the officiant, funeral director and the necessary staff.

Sir, there is always somebody who is trying to get away. I understand that somebody had a party planned and when they realised they could not have it, they decided to keep a bus crawl. That kind of stuff is completely irresponsible, it is repugnant to commonsense, and it endangers every single person in this country. Let us make it clear, Sir: No person shall host or attend a private party, a recreational or competitive sporting event - I have already talked about weddings -- a banquet, a ball or reception, any social event, a meeting of a fraternal society, private or social club or civic association or organisation. Sir, I do not know how else we can put it. The Minister said it most eloquently last night when she said, "Stan home." We have to eliminate the spread of COVID, and it is not worth it for you to go out and have a little fete and a little frolic and so on and then either contract the COVID yourself and spread it your aunt, your uncle, sister, brother and children for two or three hours of social interaction.

Sir, there are also a number of other restrictions. No person shall visit any place of quarantine or an isolation station. No person shall visit a prison or a Government industrial school, so visits to Her Majesty's Prisons or the Government Industrial Schools are terminated during this period. Private businesses can operate from home, Sir. We are closing down all businesses but that does not mean that if you can conduct your enterprise from home or if all 50 or however many of your employees can work from home, let them do so. We are not trying to eliminate commercial activity or beneficial activity. If you can do it from home, fine, but you are not going to be allowed to go to your office to do it.

No more than one person at any time shall visit a patient in a hospital, nursing home, senior citizens' home or maternity home and facilities for the treatment of persons with addiction or dependency on drugs or substances. We have repeated it just to be sure. Subject to the provisions of this directive, every person shall remain in the confines of his home and his curtilage. If a person contravenes this directive without reasonable explanation, he is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine

of \$50 000 or to imprisonment for a term of one year or both. Sir, we are going to ask the Government Information Service to publish this particular list. There are all kinds of lists that have floated out there on social media. Let me make it clear, because I think I have been passed a little note. Insurance companies are closed. I am sure you are going to see a meme any day now with the Attorney General's face announcing "closed". This is a very serious issue, Sir, and we have to take it seriously.

Sir, it is for a two-week period. There is a possibility of the time being extended but we will deal with that when we get there. At this point in time, we know that we are determined that this is the period of time we are going to restrict the movement of Barbadians. We hope that our efforts will, as they say, flatten the curve. At this point in time I have to pay special tribute to the people who are involved in the public health sector. I do not think we understand what it involves of them. When an individual is found to have contracted COVID, every single person with whom that person came into contact has to be tracked and traced and screened. Sir, a person who lands at the airport comes across a greeter first, then an Immigration Officer, a Red Cap, a Customs Officer, maybe a taximan outside and on and on. If they go into Oistins on a Friday night, that is many more people, but the public health nurses have to trace every single person with whom you came into contact.

Sir, the Minister of Health told me that his people were overwhelmed by sheer numbers of people to track down, and therefore we have had to try to assist by finding retired police officers to come and actually help to take some of that load off them. The individuals who are on the frontline, Mr. Speaker for those individuals, it takes an inordinate amount of courage to deal as a health practitioner with individuals who are ill. Now I know that they are accustomed doing it every day. They see patients with cancer, diabetes and all kinds of things. Sir, I could not be a doctor, but with what we know about COVID, with a report yesterday that said 39 doctors died of COVID in Spain, with new stories every day about nurses and other health care professionals who are losing their lives to this disease for all public health people to be on the frontline and to report for duty every single day Sir is a remarkable thing and they must be thanked.

I also want to thank our heroes. Mr. Speaker, they are some people in Barbados who we do not treat them as well as we should and when I say we I am not talking about really the Government, I am talking about the people. Barbadians do not know for example that every time the doctors had to go out to one of those ships and take swabs for testing, they would have been taken out to those ships by the officers of the Coast Guard. That too Sir, requires a tremendous amount of bravery. They would not know that the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force are

required to be on guard at quarantine facilities to ensure that the individuals do not try to get out and I tell you now that some of them have tried to get out. Some of them have tried to leave. The members of the Royal Barbados Police Force have to put themselves on the line to prevent that from happening. Sir I am told that individuals have gone into police stations coughing and sneezing, and you know what Sir, the police cannot tell you go outside, you have come to the station for assistance, they are on the frontline and they have to deal with you Sir. For all of these little things that help our communities and our societies to function, we have to say thank you.

They are a whole set of others like the nurses. They are required to work above and beyond the call of duty during this period, they too have to be thank. However, we are still at the start, and I am sure that many more accolade will be offered as we get through this, but get through it we will. I hope that when we emerge on the other side of COVID that we will emerge as a more resilient Barbados that we will emerge as a Barbados that has reconnected with those things that we used to hold dear. Things like caring, being generous, sharing with neighbours, and things of that sort. Sir I hope that this disease will help to bring us closer to all sense of humanity and to recognising that existence is not about collecting material goods but how we can touch the lives of other people.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that we are going to get through this. I believe that we have a real chance of suppressing the spread of COVID, but we can only do it Sir if we ban together and accept that everybody must make some sacrifice. The citizen has to sacrifice his ability to come and go as he please, but it is for the good of all Barbadians. The businesses will have to sacrifice because they cannot function as they would like come Sunday morning, Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday morning, but it is because we need to eliminate this disease from our shores. Mr. Speaker, I hope to have the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the country tonight, myself, the Minister of Health and others and as we work to try to get a more perfect solution, we welcome questions. People have only been asking for various exemptions, some are manifestly and reasonable, while others are worthy of consideration. We will consider everything, but our overriding objective always is to remove the risk of spread and we can only do that if we suppress human contact and interaction. I am obliged to you.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I will accommodate you, but in truth and in fact after the Honourable Member for St. Joseph it really was your turn to speak prior to reading the second reading. Honourable Member for St. Michael West, I will permit you in these circumstances.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I thank you for permitting me Mr. Speaker in these circumstances. Mr. Speaker, there are times in the affairs of men, in the affairs of nations, diverse demographics idealistic features when men recognise the reality in what occur, one must in our particular circumstance a recognition that we are together in this, that each of us has a responsibility to be his brother's keeper that I am not as well as I can be if you are ill or not well and the chain of this community is only as strong as the weakest link of every member of this national community. The circle of unity is broken when my hand falls from yours or your hand falls from mine. As the Honourable Attorney general would have said, threats of this nature such as the one we current face have a tendency very quickly to equalise the classes and reduce or remove the distinctions. It has a tendency very quickly to make a nonsense of political divisions in political polarisation. We recognise we face a common foe, which means none of us which intends none of us want, reinforces a sense of our aim collected vulnerability and indeed even now at mortality. Clearly now the common threat before us calls for common response and a common effort to overcome that threat.

I just wanted to insert my brief comments in those introductory terms. I am not going to second guess the government of Barbados, this Administration and their approach to the management of this current perilous situation before the country. I am not equally possessed with them of all the knowledge. I presumed that they act, based on the best professional advice at home, perhaps across the region and maybe even further afield, so, I am not going to second guess. I have already said publicly so particularly at this time Barbadians need to trust the government and that is a call to trust in the institution of government because the institution of government has served this country well over time. In our brighter moments as well as in our darker days in the face now seemly a particularly dark day. I repeat, that call that we trust the institution, trust the government and hold the presumption that they act in the interest of Barbados. The totality of that interest and that they act in the best advice coming from the professional experts in various fields.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph has spoken pretty clearly here this morning, even clarifying one or two things for me. I sat here with a recognition that I was possessed of one or two minor misconceptions that even having spoken in that fashion, I would want today to suggest and humbly so that what has been said here needs

to be repeated before this debate ends. It needs to be repeated outside of these corridors perhaps multiple times before the message fully gets through. There are some things that remain to be made clear. The onus is on government in the interest of its successful performance and management of this issue in the interest of the Barbadian public to make sure that as much clarity comes to the situation as is possible. There are some issues which will emanate from the decisions taken as to how the economy and the society should function over the next couple of weeks and possibly beyond. Issues show up with respect to transportation, logistics around worksites to the extent that those business operations still have the liberty to function in set time periods. This shows up issues concerning people movement to logistic on the worksite. Public services have been referenced also in the private sector. Perhaps it is an addressing some of these that not always innovative different ways will be found to address some of our perennial problems. I think, and I mention this just in passing, those in the frontline of the tourism sector involved in transportation movement of people. We already have been hit hard by the lack of business, the non-arrival of tourist to our shores, taxi people on the front line who are now put on the breadline in an effort to create social distancing. The implications for our movement of people by public transport that becomes an issue. Maybe there is an opportunity for those who mainly serve by providing transport in the tourism sector to be allowed to assist with transportation out of public sector under some temporary mechanism, which might help to alleviate their problems of loss of earning capacity because they now cannot go to the airport or to the seaport to pick up passengers. I would want to call on the administration to take a very strong line and a hard line against employers who with scant regard for the interest of employees would seek to find ways around the stipulations being enunciated in their interest of furthering their own capital gains making money, common greed and who in that context and from that point of view would put the interest of employees and therefore by extension the interest of the public in a secondary position. I believe a very hard and tough line should be taken on that. I am not in any way standing here to try to lay strictures against the private sector in Barbados. I am not accusing the public sector in Barbados of any kind of behaviour that seeks to suggest that they are the worst in the world or that they engage in nefarious and undesirable practices with scant respect for the law or anything like that, I am not saying that. I am saying in repeat what I have said from the beginning that we have to be careful that this opportunity is not used by some who are motivated purely or too much by greed to price gouge and to take advantage of people at a time of challenge and difficulty. I am saying further that when comes to the Management of staff and employees and in the context of these new stipulations, a tough line should be taken by the Government of the day against such persons, and practices.

With respect to the Bill, I had two queries, which I hope would be addressed at some point. It seems to me that the stipulation is being made that 33(5) of the Principle Act, which refers to Statutory instruments being made subject to negative Resolution should be removed. I have to query, with my lawyer, I simply query why the proposal, the stipulation that that be removed 33(5) of the Principle Act where it relates to statutory instruments being subject to negative resolution?

The second question, I have to raise is space. Why not include clause 4 of the Emergency Powers Act, which requires that orders given under this legislation, be laid in Parliament? I think the particular clause if that is the right terminology states orders effective for seven days only after being laid unless a continuance is approved by the Parliament of Barbados. I hope I got that clear, if I did not, I am sure your legal minds will having read the legislation comparing it to the Emergency Powers Act, comparing it to the Principle Act, which Emergency Management Act those two questions occur to me.

Inadvertently, Mr. Speaker, I want to come to matters of the Church. I understand very clearly what the Attorney- General has outlined for us. It really will constitute a significant challenge in the Barbadian context, I think. I am not saying that stipulation is out of place unreasonable. I am just saying the Barbadian context to stipulate that the number of mourners at a funeral be reduced by ten.

Asides.

BISHOP J. J. S. ATHERLEY: To reduce the amount of funerals necessary, I understand where you are coming from but to the extent where you may have one or two who passed from this world without being impacted by COVID-19, we operate in a Barbadian context where there are large families. I think that is going to pose a challenge.

I could understand the reasoning because you want to limit crowds to a certain extent and I understand the aside from my Honourable friend from Christ Church East, who says that we want to limit funerals. The reality is that the small number of 10 mourners is going to present a challenge in the Barbadian context. In terms of weddings, I do not know that I fully understand why they cannot be deferred, but I suppose a sufficient reason can be found for that if one thinks upon it hard enough. One would have thought in the circumstances that a wedding could have been deferred a few months down the road. I would imagine so.

I offer that opinion for what it is worth. It may be that there are those who think this is a good time to get married because you do not need to have a large guest list and could significantly reduce your expenses. I do not

know if that is the thinking of the Attorney General. I suspect it is not but for what it is worth. Beyond that, there are some issues relative to the church and I understand the pronouncement of churches being closed in keeping with the rest of society being closed down in some respects. However, I want to put this case to the Government. The problem that we face with the threat of COVID-19 is its threat to our physical well-being. It is a threat to life. It is a threat to our economic well-being.

I think the problem needs to be more fully defined than that. In the wake of the physical impact, economic impact, psychological and emotional stress, people will be faced with a strong sense of fear. It is already out there and that is in part why we are discussing this issue in this format today because there is a sense of fear that this can get the better of us if we do not get on top of it quickly, early and put measures in place. There is a sense of fear. It is global and here at home with us. There is a sense of a threat of loss of employment, opportunity, income and privileges.

There is a serious threat of loss, Mr. Speaker. There is a threat of dislocation, heightened sense of vulnerability and exposure to an illness that stalks the land which is invisible to the natural eye, so to speak. What I am trying to point to, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that what you are going to be dealing with here as a problem has not only a physical and economic dimension, but has a very strong spiritual element and dynamic. The Government will mount and lead a response to the threat that dogs the land. We try to make sure that we retain as best as we can a sense of economic well-being.

We try to make sure as best as we can that the health threat is minimised and we do not suffer of high incidence of loss of life. All of this in place, Mr. Speaker, man is a spiritual being. This problem has a spiritual dimension to it and I urge the Government to realise that in making a response to this problem, there must be a spiritual element brought to bear upon the matter as well. Last weekend, we declared a National Day of Prayer across faith-based communities in Barbados and that is fine. I do not understand how you can have a list of essential services which does not include the church. I am humbly suggesting that we should recognize the church in this particular instance and circumstance as an essential service. Man as a spiritual being cannot deal without some form of spiritual nurture.

Barbados is a religious community. We celebrate it in everything we do. We have become quite diverse in our faith these days. The point I am trying to make here is this. The medical professionals will respond. Where it is necessary, the security personnel will play their part. Where it is necessary, all these other essential elements identified come to the table and bring their hands to the

work. A church, the Government should not fail to recognise the potential role of the church in all of this. I really do strongly believe that it should be declared in this circumstance, recognising the circumstance as an essential service.

When people are gripped with a sense of fear, threat, loss, dislocation and bereavement, they look to the inner spiritual self and that drives them to find a spiritual source as suture and support. The church is equipped and resourced with the kind of qualifications among its leadership and its laity that can help in mounting this national response. The Government's call coming from its own lips, all hands on deck and every hand to the plough, we all must make a response on this matter and a contribution in this instance. You cannot list a whole set of entities and I understand that you make provision for application to be made, and that is good and prudent.

I am simply making the case from this position for the church to be seen as an essential service. People on the frontlines of this business will have to be comforted and counselled. It is not only the protective gear around the physical being that is an essential requirement. People on the frontlines of this will be possessed of high levels of stress and fear. This is normal. They will be separated from their families to some extent. These things create heightened levels of stress and need within people the level of the mind and spirit for counsel, comfort and consolation. These things are not always found when one goes in a quiet corner and communes with oneself or some higher power, or mediates in one own space.

Sometimes, it calls for a comforting and counselling voice. A church it possessed of people who cross that and are trained in this regard. Your frontline people will need to be counselled. This threat it is said is posed more so to those who are elderly, although the statistics are beginning to suggest otherwise. Mr. Speaker, no one more than them make recourse to spiritual nurture and help. No one more than them with their eyes to the hills whence comes thereof, none more than them and I do not believe that you can entirely shut them off from recourse to this type of ministry and to this type of help. Notwithstanding that we understand person to person contact must enhance the threat but, Mr. Speaker, these are people now who are even more isolated perhaps than they had been in the past. These are people who feel more a sense of being on their own and alone now. These are people who feel more vulnerable now than they did in the past and if ever they needed this type of help, this of circumstance chose that so when it comes to moment, Mr. Speaker, I think what I would be willing to suggest is that exemptions should be made for persons within the faith community and those members can be arrived at by discussion with the faith community. An exemption should be made with respect to restriction of movement for purposes as I intimated just now, but now to

allow that, not to include that as one of the exempted restrictions with reference to movement, I think is to deny people of the valuable support mechanism at a very challenging time in their lives.

I believe that Government together with the Church can come to an understanding with respect to this, members of persons to be designated, I believe they can be an approved chaplaincy for the purpose. There are chaplains relative to some institutions in Barbados, but now all. You say you cannot visit the Hospital, you cannot visit the geriatric institution and well fine, we understand the reason for saying that. I am just putting the other side of the issue here and I am saying perhaps, you do a disservice if you completely ruled out that type of Ministry and that you do not, and if you do not, allow for exemption restricted movement for that type of 10 mourners at a funeral service is the stipulation that a family faces. The bereavement beyond the moment of the funeral before and after and an approved chaplaincy exemptions and restriction of movement, circumstances such as that allows for pastoral care for a family in circumstance when they need it. You cannot, with a distant hand, straight as a pen simply say 10 mourners at a funeral. I am not railing against that although I have cited the challenge. I am simply saying it calls for a fuller thinking that embraces the view that pastoral care, that bereavement consulting, that support at this time of ultimate sense of lost is critical and therefore I believe that to be seriously considered.

The Government has up its programme with respect to how the most vulnerable families in Barbados are handled moving from about 600 most vulnerable families to be helped through the welfare Department to 1 500 and that is laudable. I am not going to get into politics or as they would say, these are the kinds of things that the People's Party for Democracy & Development (PDP) is..... but this is not the moment, my friend and Honourable Member.

Asides.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: We did not know about Corona then but we thought ever since that the Welfare Department ought to be given more money. I told you when you brought your Ministry here to the Honourable House that you needed more money. Anyhow, we are at that point and the 1 500 of the more vulnerable families in Barbados to be ministered to, those families have to be identified. I do not know what mechanism will be used as plan imported has been used to identify those families and I do not want to lay any crass political charge against the Administration but you and I know both from experience things like that can be sung very easily into the political mire and the process becomes subject to pollicisation. It is very easy to say well, we have to identify 1 500 families, you and your constituency identify X amount, St. Michael

West surely gave you some, identified once a month. That is an easy way to go about it but the point essentially you have to make is not the political point, it is the people point that you have to make and that is this. You are dealing with people and if you want to get to the most vulnerable families you have to be able to clearly identify them having established the criteria. All I am saying is, Mr. Speaker, the Church that deals with this on an every day, every week basis knows many of those families and to assist the state machinery with identifying those families and servicing those families. Also, we do not have a wealthy church where I go on Sundays and have spiritual nurture but we do a programme like that. There are several churches across Barbados that do these programmes and involve the distribution of care items, food items, also disbursement of moneys to people who are in need and this the Government is doing. Fifteen hundred, it is a pity we have to limit it to so small a number. I wish we could do more, but what I am saying here is, the Church, Mr. Speaker, is in a position to help to properly identify those persons and help the Government to reach them with this noble intention of this monthly financial subvention. I heard talk of an augmented National Security Council. I really do strongly believe that the faith groups of Barbados, the faith community in Barbados, let me put it like that because it goes across groups, should be under an augmented national security. I know the National Security Council which is pretty narrow, that is fine and understood especially when you are dealing with certain matters, security and statements and stuff like that, my impression here is that there is now a larger augmented National Security Council because of the particular situation and nature of it, you bring in other people. That is understandable. I am saying, based on all I have said before is that the Church, and I know I am going to hear that they are, and I am not convinced that they are. They may be, or it may be that there is on the Council somebody who is a church leader or a church member or identifying a church, not sure that they are there in the capacity as representing the Church if that is so I am happy about it. I also believe that that is important. I see press briefings and I applaud the Government for the many press briefings that they have. I have one critique thus far, which I will share with my brother, Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown quietly. It is not a major thing, it simply has to do with language, but you know what, I see a Minister of Government and I see the Chief Medical Officer and I see the Czar, and it would be good symbolically if you had a spiritual leader there with you. Symbolically it signals a lot to the country, but more than a symbol, substantively it does a lot even if the person says nothing we know it does a lot. It shows to the national community of this country that the Government understands that we are dealing with a threat to our physical well-being, our economic well-being, implications to the social well-being of Barbados but the spiritual dynamic is important. We understand that and therefore they are here. That is a signal it sends, that is a message it

conveys, that we are a people of faith, we may behave in different ways, but we are a people of faith and we celebrate the God presence, even in our National Anthem. I am making a very strong case because I feel this strongly, and I have spoken to a number of church leaders in the past week and a half: all the denominations, the BXC, the BEA, Wesleyan Holiness, the Nazarene Church, Pentecostal, all of them, you name it and I think in a more structural/coordinated way that element should be included in the response we are mounting to this threat, and I say that humbly.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me say this to the Honourable Minister with responsibility for broadcasting and Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. Mr. Speaker, Sir, people are shut away from their places of worship: the synagogue, the temple, the church, the mosque -- you name it and they are at home. I heard a call being made very early for local cultural content for them to be given an expression through ventilation, they will not break Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (they are already broke) but there is nothing wrong with designating half-hour a week if you can for religious broadcasting from all faith groups on a nightly basis. Mr. Speaker, Sir, people are in their homes. If you check what is happening in the United States of America, domestic violence has gone up in the United States of America; people are pressed now within walls. It is true. Mr. Speaker, Sir, when you tell people you have to stay indoors... some people release valve is to leave home, go out, people have all kinds of tensions in their relations. Now, our situation perhaps is not as cramped as some circumstances as in certain part of the United States of America but domestic violence has increased there. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the number of gun purchases has gone up by 30 per cent. Why is this happening? When you confine people you are causing tensions which normally find some other release valve to be expressed in these compressed circumstances. All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the old lady at home does not know anything about the computer, the lap top or social media and you might find the odd service coming out of there. And the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation is a proper medium for that and I say that because I know you have MC-TV, but MC-TV gives us a lot of North American religious broadcasting which I think we ought to limit down here -- to tell the truth -- but religious broadcasting from faith groups whether it is Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Rastafarian because you have now recognised them as well. I think the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation really ought to be mandated to do at least half-hour of that every night or hour, and without cost. I really strongly believe that. Mr. Speaker, Sir, all I am trying to say here today is that I believe the Church has over the year provided an essential service in Barbados and officially in this circumstance should be recognised as such to allow for some exemptions from those movement restrictions to a designated number of people agreed to between the Government and faith

groups (I keep saying the Church, I want to say faith groups). We have had problems in Barbados with deviance and violence, issues of law and order in recent times and I am simply positing this view that was it not for the presence and work of the church in this country [that] it would be much worse. And I am saying beyond that therefore we should not face this situation with any hint or suggestion that the spiritual element, the response of the faith-based community is not realised/recognised for its value and for what it can bring to the table. If you define the problem only as a physical threat because of a virus you are going to see economic implications, you are going to see physical and medical implications, if you look at it more fully, sense of loss, threat of loss, dislocation, vulnerability, sense of hopelessness. If you see these things, then you understand that there is a spiritual element/dynamic and that part of the response must come from that spiritual dynamic as well.

I really do not want in any way to signal that I am opposing the Government's management of the situation. Like I said, they are possessed of information which I did not have and I imagine they would be guided by the best professional advice and making decisions in the interest of Barbadians. to close borders, Government must make that call, they have the information; to shut down the whole country, Government must make that call; allowing only for certain businesses to open certain hours, Government must make that call; I trust the Government as an institution and if ever we find that that trust is not merited then I will speak in different tones but today and on this spot I want to speak in the interest of Barbados and I want to urge Barbadians to heed the call to be careful, observe the protocols as have been enumerated. I simply appeal to the Government to perhaps give a wider berth in terms of its thinking to one or two of the things I have raised, and I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that further consideration of the Bill be postponed.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 16 – SECOND READING OF THE QUEEN
ELIZABETH HOSPITAL (AMENDMENT) BILL,
2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, you have the Floor.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to lead the debate on this Bill which is entitled an Act to amend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act Cap, 5(4) to make for provisions for the designation of appropriate lands or buildings to be considered to be part of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is quite clear that this Bill is about. We would have indicated very early that we are trying our very best to ensure or to keep the COVID-19 virus out of the precincts of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to isolate the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and as such we have been looking at other facilities to be able to convert them for use by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I would have also indicated several weeks ago that we are planning at all levels for however this particular virus develops in terms of spread, and since we do not know exactly what is going to happen we have to give ourselves the flexibility to be able to utilise other facilities as needed or in some cases change the use of facilities, so this is what this is all about. Mr. Speaker, Sir, what this Bill is seeking to do is to give the Minister of Health and Wellness by Order, to designate as part of the hospital any lands or buildings that he may think fit to be used as such, and any lands or buildings so designated shall be subject to this Act. I want to start, for example, with the isolation facilities that have been established by the Ministry of Health and Wellness for the management of COVID-positive patients. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that we would have stated in this Honourable Chamber the fact that the former naval facility at Harrison's Point would be retrofitted and refurbished to be able to facilitate the operation of an isolation facility as well as a quarantine facility. This is the start of the plan going forward, recognising the fact that the Enmore facility only has the capacity to treat six persons at a time; six beds maximum.

Sir, all along we were trying desperately to keep the virus out of the country in order to be able to have this facility completed but we have not been able to do so obviously, because we are impacted by several events which are happening internationally in terms of shipping and so on. The facility is still under construction but in the meantime we have had to be flexible and to be able then to create an alternative facility which is at the Paragon base in Christ Church, and at the moment that facility is used to house persons who have minor symptoms and are not considered to be serious cases for COVID and no not require and isolation facility of the type at Enmore or the type which we are retrofitting at Harrison's Point. That facility is now in use. We also have facilities in St. Lucy at the St. Lucy District Hospital and the Elaine Scantlebury Centre, which we would have indicated to be for the use of quarantining persons who are asymptomatic, person who we are monitoring, persons who would have been in contact with others testing positive for COVID-19, and persons who would have travelled to regions where there are COVID hotspots. The facility has also been refurbished and retrofitted.

Sir, these are the kinds of things which we have been doing, and as a result there is a need to place all of those facilities -- especially the isolation facilities -- under the jurisdiction of the Board and Management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That is really what this Bill is all about. We also have the field medical hospital of the Barbados Defence Force, which is being utilised and that also has to come under the jurisdiction of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We must also, as I said earlier, at short notice and depending on how things are occurring with the virus, be able to move from one type of facility to another depending on the situation. It is therefore possible in the future that a facility which is designated as a quarantine facility could become actually an isolation facility, and if we need other structures and facilities to use for COVID, this Bill gives us the opportunity to be able to do so. That is really the basis for this.

Sir, I also want to take this opportunity to say that the Government has been engaging through the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Ministry of Health and Wellness some private medical facilities for use if we need additional space. This would also be able to encompass the utilisation of these facilities. The facility at Harrison's Point is really coming along quite well. The construction phase is very advanced. We have started to receive some of the specialised equipment that is required for that facility and we are continuing to make arrangements to get the other pieces of equipment that may be stuck elsewhere at this time. When that facility comes on stream, it will really increase our capacity in a significant way. At this time, we are also utilising Paragon base, not only for isolation and quarantine but also as a screening centre. That is the major screening centre for COVID, and those operations are also coming along quite well.

Sir, I think it is important to indicate to Barbadians that given the current situation with COVID -- and I will give an update -- that at the moment we have the capacity and we have the ability to manage what is happening right now, even in spite of the fact that Harrison's Point is not yet available to us. We are going to do whatever it takes to be able to manage this situation, and we have already started the process of looking at additional facilities and how we would be able to utilise them in the event that we need to have more beds or more space to do our work. I cannot stand here without saying a big "thank you", and I have said so before, to all members of staff of all of the healthcare institutions in this country. I would have thanked the Immigration Department, the Customs Department, The Barbados Port Authority, pharmacists, the church and everyone involved. This is an all-society effort and an all-society approach for which we are eternally grateful.

Asides.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: I want to thank an institution and I am not being biased in any way. There is an institution that demonstrates to Barbadians and gives encouragement to all of us that we can do the very best we can, that duty is an honour, and that assisting this country in every aspect of national life and national development is the responsibility of each and every citizen. Sometimes people may not recognise the contribution that is being made by this institution, and I want to highlight it for a couple of minutes because I want to use it to give every citizen and every institution and organisation in this country the encouragement that is required for us to go beyond the limit and to understand exactly what is confronting us and what is required from all of us to collectively garner all of our resources and all of our efforts in fight an enemy that is both seen in terms of symptomatic persons and unseen in relation to asymptomatic persons.

Sir, I want to thank the Chief of Staff and the members of the Barbados Defence Force on whom we have been reliant - and I am speaking about the Ministry of Health and Wellness in particular -- to do some things for us that may not necessarily be considered as strictly military tasks. The Barbados Defence Force has been with us from Day 1 in terms of providing personnel to help us at the Ministry of Health and Wellness with our emergency operation centre, as well as with operational and logistics persons who have been assisting us. At the ports of entry for surveillance purposes, they have been there at the forefront and, as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph indicated earlier, the Coast Guard has been very much involved along with the Defence Force, medical personnel in terms of transporting Port Health officials to cruise ships, boarding cruise ships, assisting in the taking of swabs for testing, and also in terms of the quarantine and isolation facilities which we have for minor cases.

All persons who are collected, the ambulance service at the Defence Force and the medical personnel are the ones that are going to collect patients. I can go on and on and I really felt compelled to say so because that is a national organisation that all of us can draw strength from and that all of our institutions and organisations can rise to the occasion, whether or not we believe that we have a direct responsibility in terms of responding to COVID.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has been really happy to have been working them. Health is of course our primary so that is what is expected of us, and so that is why I am saying and I am thanking them and I am thanking all of the other organisations that I would have mentioned and the many more because all of us are in this together and it takes a whole set of things to get the persons on the frontline up and running. From people who have to cook, who have to plant, all persons in Barbados are in this together.

Mr. Speaker, I will also take this time to indicate to the public that in spite of the measures that were announced last night by the Honourable Prime Minister and today by the Honourable Attorney General, that the Sir Winston's Scott Polyclinic 24-hour service will remain a 24-hour service. We also have two extended hour services at two polyclinics, which is Maurice Byer Polyclinic in St. Peter and Randall Phillips Polyclinic in Christ Church. I will get back to you with information in relation to how there are going to operate because we now have to have some discussions with the Transport Board to see how the staff of those polyclinics will be able to make it home in time so that we will make some determinations as to exactly what time those extended hours will go to or if you will be able to continue with the extended other service. That information will be passed on as soon as possible. I think that it can also say to Barbadians at this time that we receive confirmation yesterday from Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba that the Government of Cuba have approved our request for technical assistance and that we are working on the details to get at least 100 specialist nurses from Cuba. There is one doctor in charge at this time, but we are looking for some additional resources there and that the Government of Barbados is grateful to the Government of Cuba to be able to facilitate us. This is extremely important in this fight because moving from a six bed facility at M. Moore to the facility at Harrison Point, which will have at least 38 critical care bed for COVID and by this I mean beds with ventilators and also a facility for serious patients that will not require the use of ventilators, this obviously will place a strain on the existing staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Also, recognising the fact that we intend as far as possible to be able to continue to produce the high quality health care service that we would normally be producing for Barbadians at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we recognise a need to be able to cover some gaps, to be able to provide for rotation so that those isolation and quarantine facilities are necessary are fully staffed. This certainly is come very good news as far as the Ministry of Health and Wellness is concerned.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform this Honourable Chamber and the country that yesterday we were able to conduct another 26 tests for COVID and I believe yesterday was the highest number of tests that were done and will continue in this vain. We will be doing more and more, because it is very, very important for us to be able to do so. I am really happy and I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for making the resources available to the Ministry to be able to purchase testing kits, in which this now puts us in the position to be able to test several more persons and we are doing that and will continue to do that. However, as a result those tests, two more positive cases have been identified, taking us now to 26 confirmed cases. One of those persons is a 65-year-old Barbadian who had travelled to the United States and returned and that person is now in isolation and contact tracing has begun. We are

moving aggressively to be able to identify, locate and to treat to those contacts, and I am confident that we will be able to do so. I am currently waiting for the details on the other individual. However, there are other cases. What does that mean? I have to keep saying this all the time, we can manage what we have without any fear or anything of the sort. This is manageable, we are working on it, we are on top of this, we expect that there will be more, and I am not going to say to Barbadians that there will not be. It is because of the aggressive nature of the contact tracing that we are doing and our intent to be able to contain the spread of this virus, that it is absolutely important for us to be able to reach those contacts to monitor them and to treat to them in order to prevent the spread, and we are going to do everything possible to be able to achieve that because we know in the Ministry of Health and Wellness the importance of us being able to so.

Once we can do this and achieve this, this is going to allow us to be able to control that spread and to contain this most vicious virus. I give the assurance to the Honourable Chamber and to Barbadians that whatever is required on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Wellness will be done, and this country, the Government and the social partnership and Barbadians working together, we can do this, we will do this, we must do this.

Mr. Speaker in winding down, because I did not think that there would be a need for me to spend too much time on this because I am sure that all Honourable Members in this Chamber would understand clearly the need to amend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act, to be able to facilitate what is happening now and what could happen in the future, so that we would be able to manage COVID-19 and of course as restrictions become more and more including even the way we as Parliamentarians operate, the way we as Ministers of Cabinet and Ministries operate, it is important to this at this stage so that we do not have to come back here to this if we need to be able to add additional properties, additional institutions to the fight against COVID and the treatment of COVID patient. With those few words Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central be appointed Chairman of Committees.

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

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that you do now leave the chair and let the House resolve itself into Committee.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 -3 inclusive were called and passed.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that you do now report to his Honour the Speaker the passage of one Bill in Committee.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the Committee and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chairman of Committee has reported the passing of one Bill in Committee.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be read a third time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be passed and cited as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Act.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

RECOMMITAL OF GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to grant the sum of \$ 400 200 000 in the consolidated fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the estimates 2019- 2020

as shown in supplementary estimates number 17 2019-2020.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 17

To move that the House resolve itself into Standing Finance Committee to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this island.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that you do now leave the chair and that the House resolve itself into Standing Finance Committee.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

COMMITTEE

To move the passing of a Resolution to grant the sum of \$ 400 200 000 from a consolidated fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the estimates 2019-2020 as shown in the supplementary estimate number 17 2019- 2020 which form the schedule to the Resolution.

HEAD 35

Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs in the amount of \$ 100 200 000.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee. Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, as we approach the end of the financial year and certainly in the midst of the Government's response to COVID-19. The sums of money being requested in this Resolution in total is to respond to on two fronts. I will speak as extensive as I can just to bring the House as up to date as possible.

Last Friday the Honourable Prime Minister announced a series of measures in conclusion to the appropriation Bill, which spoke to what the government would put in place with respect to the unprecedented impact with respect to the global economy and how it would affect Barbados. The household survival program Sir, as articulated by the Honourable Prime Minister in terms of response of changes that we will make with respect to the upcoming budget. An analysis with respect to our current situation as it relates to the end of this financial year in reviewing the data with respect to the flow of social

spending. We recognise that between now, and Tuesday of next week Sir, that they will be some \$ 1.2 million, which would mean that we would potentially be short of the target with respect to the flow on social spending.

While all the other departments within the context of the BERT Programme have been met with respect to the spending, we felt that given the circumstances certainly as we are now to ensure that we can protect families, rather than allow these monies to lapse and not meet that target, we would put these monies into the Child Care Board (CCB) now in order to ensure that families with four or more children under the age of 21 benefit. It is important to recognize that there will be an impact significantly on a large part of the society with respect to the impact of the economy. These sums of money will be place in the CCB in order to advance some of that relief with respect to the Household Survival Programme which will in a sense ensure that we provide and accelerate with respect to those sums.

The truth is this is a mechanism that we are employing to ensure that the monies do not lapse but that we are capable with respect to the preparation that the Welfare Department is now currently undertaking that with respect to the next financial year, there is actually money immediately available to be capable of ensuring that whatever has been left from the end of this financial year can continue within the context of the first few weeks in April, so that those most vulnerable families can get the support that they want. While this is not necessarily currently the mandate of childcare in that context because obviously the CCB has a greater set of circumstances that they look at with respect to the care of children, we felt that it was critical at this time to have a whole of Government's approach with respect to being able to support families.

Therefore, in a very clear sense the CCB will work with the Welfare Department. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has been working as she represented in the Estimates with respect to identification of the most vulnerable families in the country. Therefore, coming out of that data this is simply a mechanism for Government not to work in silos but to support the ability to bring as urgently relief that we can give to families. Given that mandate, we want to be able to accelerate from within the context of those families that are most vulnerable and have support given immediately with respect to those families.

It is critical that where we are now and coming very rapidly to the end of this financial year and making monies available to certainly the Ministry of Health, in terms of a response to COVID-19 preparedness, our focus and gaze is to continue to support the medical response. As we transition to this particular period, especially in the context of the announcement of the curfew and the impact that

would have certainly on a lot of families with respect to the closure of businesses, it is critically important that the Government and all of its agencies work seriously together in order to ensure that all persons who we can touch to bring some relief, we do so as quickly as possible.

Therefore, this particular provision is to ensure that we can accelerate the relief as quickly as possible. Having said that, Sir, I want to indicate that obviously we will have to make some adjustments to the Appropriations Bill we just passed, in the same way that the Attorney General has announced in a sense essential services with respect to previous debate. The reality is now that we have to do a similar process with respect to the programmes of Government.

Therefore, while persons will continue to work from home in that context, we are in the process of determining which programmes of Government will be suspended and more information will be provided with respect to that, in order to ensure that we can first contain the public health threat that COVID-19 presents.

Once Barbadians heed the call with respect to the medical officials and the impact of the curfew, we can bring certainly within two weeks those numbers down, so that we can then focus on the economics of being able to bring the economy back, as far as we can with respect to a stimulus. Therefore, it is critically important that as we do this part we also contain the spread of the virus, so we can bring relief to those persons from an economic perspective so that persons can go about their daily business as normal as possible. Certainly, we anticipate that with the cooperation of all Barbadians that we would be able to stem the further spread with respect to COVID-19 and on April 15, we should be able to open back the country.

Sir, this is our anticipation with the cooperation of Barbadians to open back the country with some normalization of services, generally speaking, across the economy so that we can start to get things rolling again. Of course, as you well know, the global economy still will be reeling with respect to the pandemic. Therefore, it is critically important that we bring relief to those families obviously who would be most affected by loss of jobs and lack of economic activity. Hence, we have crafted a solution that will respond not just to them, but in order to keep businesses going as much as we can. Let me take the opportunity, Sir, to indicate through you to the country that having announced a number of measures by the Attorney General in the previous Bill, there a few things over the course of the next two weeks that will not happen.

Therefore, from an operational perspective as it relates to the Barbados Revenue Authority (BRA), BRA working with the Barbados Licensing Authority (BLA) will not be issuing any stickers. There will be no need for any

member of the public to go to BRA with respect to the issuing of stickers for the number plate. This will be suspended and we will communicate that officially to the public in the appropriate announcement. I am saying that here because as we are trying to contain the spread and ensure that we protect the workers, there will be no need for that activity to take place with BRA at any of its branches.

Barbadians can feel comfortable that there will be no need for the issuing of the stickers for any vehicles that may expire between now and April 15. Therefore, there is no need to go to BRA to conduct that business on behalf of any vehicles' coverage that may expire during that time. Similarly, as it relates to the renewal of drivers' licences that may expire during that time, we will make provisions with being able to ensure that no one is penalized for not renewing their driver's licence during that time. Therefore, there will be no need for persons to come to BRA or the BLA to deal with that because we appreciate that while those are things that people may wish to continue to do, we want to say to citizens that those two specific activities which typically represent high volume traffic for those agencies will no longer be required.

Let me take this opportunity as well, Sir, to say to all Barbadians who are impacted with respect to now being unemployed that the National Insurance Scheme has put out guidance specifically for how to access and to make applications, Sir, with respect to the online facilities in order to be able to access their unemployment benefits and similarly sickness and the other benefits that they normally dispense and I know that you, Sir, have been in the vanguard of insuring that operationally the National Insurance Scheme would be able to deliver certain with respect to those increase in claims and I want to take this particular opportunity to say to all of Barbados that the Government of Barbados has moved swiftly to advance a number of plans that we had in place with respect to the digitisation whilst everything may not necessarily be ready as we would have liked, I want to urge all Barbadians to take the time to access those systems digitally so that we reduce the physical contact that is required certainly within the next two weeks in terms of being able to dispense with some of these services so the Government, whilst working in a scaled down environment will ramp up our digital presence for citizens to be able to access some of these services. At some point, certainly over the next few months, I know that we will be in a position again as I referenced the drivers' licenses that we would be in a position, Sir, to have an online facility to be able to renew that. That is not available right now but all we are saying at this point is that if your driver's license expires within the next two weeks, there will be no need to go into the Barbados Licensing Authority to renew as such, therefore, once the Government opens back for business, then we will just simply validate that period. There will be no penalties

or interests with respect to that but I just want to give citizens the assurance that only for those very critical things that you need to go into these Government departments for that you will be able to do and the simple message, Sir, is to stay at home in order to ensure that we can help contain the spread with respect to these things.

Again, Sir, no person should be required to renew a driver's license. None of those stickers will be issued, certainly over the next two weeks, therefore, persons should not go to the Barbados Revenue Authority or the Barbados Licensing Authority to conduct any of those specific services given the mandate for us to be able to contain the spread. The reality is, Sir, that at this stage we have to ensure that we do all that we can to allow Barbadians to stay at home with respect to being able to contain the spread of the virus, therefore, we are in a position to make some of these critical announcements at this stage. Sir, this is a critical moment in the country and these supplementaries that have come before this Honourable Chamber today and you know I will speak to the other Head afterwards, but I felt it was important to take the opportunity to indicate to Barbadians that things have changed and certainly with respect to the anticipated announcement of the curfew, that it is not business as usual. In the same way that we have come here to do the supplementary to put with respect to the Child Care Board in order to advance the relief to those families with four children or more, specifically during this time that these are extraordinary times, therefore, we have to adapt our systems with respect to being able to do that.

Sir, in addition, we want to assure all Barbadians that the financial resources that are required to deal with this fight against Covid-19, the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown certainly has indicated that all of his staff and the appropriate agencies that are involved have been working, Sir, together tirelessly since the beginning of this year, therefore, it is now time for Barbadians to play their part. We will make the necessary financial resources available but at the end of it, it requires the absolute participation of all Barbadians to ensure that we can first contain the spread of the virus and once we have successfully done that, Sir, then we can focus in a more laser-like fashion with respect to the relief and the stimulus that we anticipate that the Government can deliver, but the Government can only deliver that stimulus if, after this two week curfew sessions that yes, there are provisions being made for certain business activities to take place, people still have to go to supermarkets, people still have to go to the doctor, people still have to go to the pharmacies and the like, but those should be the very limited activities that people engage in and that you go out and only access those services as required. We have done all that we can, Sir, at this stage with respect being able to ensure that we encourage at this stage and I know that once its critical, I want to take the opportunity to say to

Barbadians officially that, I know it is not the time that people may wish to hear, but for those persons certainly, Sir, who will benefit from the compensatory income credit that we are encouraging those persons to file as soon as the filing seasons starts on 1st April. I am asking those persons who have earned between \$25 000 and \$35 000 to file the open taxes as quickly as possible so that we can assess them and have those compensatory income credits paid as early as we can pay them, Sir, as well as those persons who will benefit from the reverse tax credits to do so as early as possible in April so that the Government in an effort to monitor and ensure that those persons who may perhaps be most vulnerable that we can deliver those credits to them as early as possible so that we can help with respect to being able to put some monies into people's pockets simply because, Sir, we recognise that the economy will take a hit, therefore, the Government wants to be in a position to use all of its administrative powers to be capable of ensuring that those persons who need it most right not can actually have the benefit with respect to that.

Sir, with those very, very, very few words, I wish to move that Head 35 stand part.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question is that Head 35 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 35 -- MINISTRY OF FINANCE,
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND INVESTMENT IN THE
AMOUNT OF \$3 MILLION

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: The sums of money being requested here, Sir, and it is a very interesting time, Sir, given that globally, the global supply chain is rapidly changing as we see it, therefore the sums of money being asked for at this time is to ensure that the Government of Barbados can support the operations of LIAT. Let me just say, Sir, that for the benefit of, not just the Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber but certainly for the country, part of the reason that we have not closed our borders and certainly the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown can attest, that Barbados is still in the process of acquiring a number of critical items that are required for the ordinary daily function for members of the healthcare system but certainly for the whole of the economy and part of what is being asked for LIAT is in response with respect to Covid-19 is that operationally now, as there is limited aircraft certainly coming into the country we still have to move stuff around the region, not just people, but also cargo as well in a short space of time. I can say to you, Sir, that notwithstanding the challenges over the years with respect to issues with LIAT, at this

particular point in time where there is limited access with respect to commercial aircrafts coming in Barbados we still have a responsibility not just to ourselves but to our neighbours to ensure that where it is necessary (because you would recall that there are still people who access medical services in Barbados with respect to citizens from the Organisation of Eastern Developing States) but the focus now is to transition, in a sense, part of LIAT's operation to be capable of allowing cargo to move more quickly across the region and therefore the sums of money being asked for is to allow the operation of LIAT to continue such that we are capable of maintaining a level of connectivity across the region. Now, sir, as you well know this Government is committed not just because of our responsibility for the Caribbean Single Market and Economy but this Government is absolutely committed to regional integration and at this critical time notwithstanding the challenges with LIAT and the compounding issues that we have seen over the years, we believe that at this particular point in time that leadership is important in being able to ensure that logistically that we are capable within the region of maintaining a level of connectivity that allows us to connect with each other. I know that there has been some talk recently with respect to the fact that some nationals have been left outside of their borders, the reality is that this Government is committed to ensuring that logistically we can move stuff, as well as personnel as is required around the region and I think it is important for us to support that effort in that vein.

Mr. Chair, I know that for the country, as we are going through this particular process, that while over the course of the next two weeks it is critical that persons stay at home and stay away from places, unless they absolutely have to engage in those activities. We want to give the assurance that the Government is still looking at all of the options that are available to us to ensure that we can still engage the world, that we can still get our critical items into the country, and at the same time, Sir, that we can give support to some of our regional neighbours as may be required, because at the end of the day, Sir, we are one Caribbean. Sir, with those few words, I beg to move that Head 34 stand part.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. K.D.M. HUMPHREY, Mr. Chairman reported to His Honour the Speaker, the passing of one Money Resolution in Standing Finance Committee and His Honour the Speaker resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. K.D.M. HUMPHREY, the Money Resolution was read a first time, a second time, and passed.

ORDER NO. 15 – SECOND READING OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BILL, 2020

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Joseph, you have the Floor.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, by way of wrap-up I just wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments. I should give notice (it is a procedural matter but we will probably get to it in Committee) but I just want to give notice of it now to this Honourable Chamber. It is proposed to amend the Bill that has been tabled to allow for Cabinet to delegate to the Honourable Prime Minister the power to make such directives as may be required in the public's interest. There is nothing sinister behind this. In fact, it is purely out of necessity because this situation is very fluid, Orders may need to be made in respect of a whole raft of things, it can happen at a moment's notice, it can happen in the dead of night, it can happen in the early hours of the morning. The Orders, you would appreciate that might be required to be made are myriad. I could not easily tell you what the entire raft of them would be, so given that it would not always be possible to convene a meeting of Cabinet, we might end up having to convene meetings of Cabinet six times a day. There might be a reason for the Honourable Prime Minister to make a particular Order but we might have to convene a Cabinet meeting at 2 o'clock in the morning. With this kind of emergency we cannot afford to hamstring ourselves in this way and therefore it is proposed, Sir, that Cabinet should be able to delegate to the Prime Minister the power to make such directives under this legislation as may be required in the public interest. I believe that it is the appropriate thing to do, it is the practical measure and I support that amendment. So when we get to Committee I will be moving that amendment and of course the Leader of the Opposition can weigh in on it at that time but I am grateful for the support of Honourable Members and I hope that we would all join, notwithstanding that churches and other religious institutions will be close, that we can still join each other in prayer in our own places for the safety of all of Barbados and for the safety of our families wherever in the world they may be.

I beg to move that this be read a second time.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker I beg to move that you do now leave the Chair and the House to dissolve itself into Committee.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. A. R. FORDE, the House resolved itself into Standing Finance Committee on the Bill. Mr. G. P. GOODING-EDGHILL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Standing Finance Committee.

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 & 2 were called and passed.

Clause 3 was called.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, in Clause 3 I would like to propose an Amendment to insert at sub-clause 6 the words as shown on the amended Bill which I have shown to you and which the Leader of the Opposition has seen. Then what was sub-clause 6 would consequentially numbered sub-clause 7.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, whereas I support the substantive measure brought before us, this Amendment that is being proposed is not one that finds favour with me. If I am reading correctly, in an order pursuant to subsections 4 and 5 -- that is where we are, is it not? - Parliament may delegate to the Prime Minister the power to make such directives as may be required in the public interest. Mr. Speaker, such orders refer to orders made under Section 3 of the Emergency Powers Act, CAP 161 Sections 6 and 7 of the Quarantine Act, CAP 53, Section 3 of the Miscellaneous Controls Act, CAP 329, and several other regulations related to the Health Services Communicable and Notifiable Diseases, 1969.

Sir, I am not suggesting anything sinister. I am not suggesting that it is anticipated that there will be anything sinister. Notwithstanding the supporting which I give to the measure substantively, already in this parliamentary set-up we have mooted in theory but substantially more so in practice Cabinet's dominance obtaining right here - because of the composition of the Cabinet numbers -- over this Parliament. That always exists in our kind of

parliamentary system but it exists to an exaggerated extent in our current circumstances here in the Parliament of Barbados. The Cabinet under the measure that we are proving here is being given major powers. This is under the Emergency Management Act, where the Cabinet is being given major powers to issue orders. Now we want further to give to one embodiment. I respect the Office of Prime Minister and the holder of her Office but what we are seeking to do here is put in the hands of one individual, in my view, an inordinate amount of power to give directives, having been delegated those powers by the Cabinet of Barbados.

Sir, I do not know that we need to do that in this day and age where, with the technology that we have, we have already heard that we had one Cabinet meeting held yesterday using the facility of Zoom. I do not know that we need to do that, and if we have to delegate certain powers to the Prime Minister or any Minister for that matter in a circumstance such as this where you are operating under Emergency Management Act and issuing orders under that Act, there should be some need for immediate or soon validation of those directives, or there should be some provision for some process -- minimal, though it may be -- of consultation between the Prime Minister, Her Excellency the Governor General, the Leader of the Opposition, somebody. I do not support at all the placing of this inordinate amount of power in any one pair of hands. I think we should provide some form of validation soon after directives are issued; perhaps some process of consultation before the directive is issued by whatever means.

We already have in our little democracy, our Westminster system, the future of prime ministerial power and we are extending that. I do not suggest we anticipate any sinister doings. That is not where I am coming from. I am coming from a theoretical perspective. I believe in the preservation of constitutional powers. We have to face an emergency and we should find better mechanisms to deal with things like that rather than simply place all of these powers in the hands of one person in a context where you are operating under emergency situations and emergency powers. I object very strenuously to this one.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I note the Honourable Member's objections but I do not know that any point is made by me repeating what I have already offered to the Chamber. There is a reason why the Governor General is going to be asked to declare a State of Emergency. This is not business as usual and the Executive has to be able to operate with a level of alacrity that merits the seriousness with which this crisis must be taken. I beg to move that Clause 3 stand part as amended.

Hon. C. Y. FORDE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Clause 3 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clause 3 was passed.

Clause 4 and 5 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W.A. ABRAHAMS, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W.A. ABRAHAMS, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Emergency Management (Amendment) Act, 2020.

On the motion of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, Madam CHAIR reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee and His Honour the SPEAKER resumed the CHAIR and reported accordingly

On the motion of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, the bill was read a third time had passed and cited as the Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: With that we have come to the end of the day's Sitting and beg to move the adjournment of the Sitting until April 17, 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that Sir.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until April 17, 2020 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Speaker adjourned the Sitting accordingly.

CONTENTS

PAPERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....	1
1. The Directors' Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2018.	
2. The Loan Contract No. 4987/00CBA between the Government of Barbados and the Inter-American Development Bank, Sustainable Development Policy Programme.	

MINUTES

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....	2
Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 2; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 2; Hon. R. St.C. Toppin, 2.	

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....	2
Hon. Miss. C. Y. Forde, 2; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 2.	

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....	2
Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 2.	

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 15.....	2
Hon. D. D. Marshall, 2, 8, 9; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 10, 14; Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, 10, 11, 13; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 14.	

ORDER NO. 16 – SECOND READING OF THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020.....	14
Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic, 15, 16, 17; Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 17; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 17.	

RECOMMITAL OF GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....	17
----------------------------------	----

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 17.....	18
Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 18.	

HEAD 35

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN.....	18
Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 20; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 21.	

ORDER NO. 15 – SECOND READING OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BILL, 2020.....	21
Hon. D. D. Marshall, 21; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 22; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 22.	

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL.....	22
Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, 22; Hon. Miss. C. Y. Forde, 23.	

ADJOURNMENT.....	23
Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 23; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 23.	

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ABRAHAMS, Hon. W. A.
ATHERLEY, Bishop J. J. S.
BOSTIC, Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D.
BRADSHAW, Hon. Miss S. J. O.
BRADSHAW, Hon. Miss S. J. O.
FORDE, Hon. Miss. C. Y.
HUMPHREY, Hon. K. D. M.
MARSHALL, Hon. D. D.
STRAUGHN, Hon. R. R.
TOPPIN, Hon. R. St.C.

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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 preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. First Readings; Order No. 15. The Bill is called the ‘Emergency Management Bill, 2020’ at first reading and in the second Order No. 15 heading, but the ‘Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020’ in the first Order No. 15 and in the third-reading entries. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 15, second reading. The second reading is recorded as agreed to immediately after the Attorney General’s speech; the Speaker then allows the Leader of the Opposition to speak, further consideration is postponed, and the Bill is later moved again for second reading after the Attorney General’s wrap-up. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 15, report and third reading. The report from Committee and the third reading are each recorded twice: first ‘Mr. CHAIRMAN’ reported, seconded by Hon. W. A. Abrahams, and the Bill was cited as the ‘Emergency Management (Amendment) Act, 2020’; then ‘Madam CHAIR’ reported, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, and the Bill was cited as the ‘Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020’. Both are printed as in the source. Please confirm which is correct.

Q5. Order No. 15, Committee. The procedural note says the House resolved itself into ‘Standing Finance Committee on the Bill’ (heading ‘STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE’), and the motion speaks of the House to ‘dissolve itself into Committee’. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 17, Heads. The Resolution is for \$400 200 000, but the two Heads shown are ‘Head 35’ for the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs (\$100 200 000) and ‘HEAD 35’ again for the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment (\$3 million). Printed as in the source.

Q7. Minutes; First Readings. The Leader of Government Business is labelled ‘Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW’ twice. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Adjournment. The motion is to adjourn until April 17, 2020, but the procedural sentence reads ‘The

question that the Sitting be suspended until April 17, 2020’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Friday, 27th March, 2020 at 10 a.m. at the Parliament of Barbados located at Worthing Corporate Centre, with Mr. Speaker presiding; prayers were taken by the Reverend Mark Harewood. The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, laid the Directors’ Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for the year ended March 31, 2018 and a Loan Contract with the Inter-American Development Bank for the Sustainable Development Policy Programme. The Emergency Management Bill, 2020 and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were read a first time, and Standing Orders were suspended.

The Attorney General, Hon. D. D. Marshall, Member for St. Joseph, moved the second reading of the Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020. He said that the Government had chosen to treat COVID-19 as a public health emergency under its own statute rather than rely only on the Emergency Powers Act, and that with 24 cases the Prime Minister had announced the curfew. He read the list of essential services, set out the hours for bakeries, farms, cleaning services and drive-through or take-away restaurants, said hotels, villas and Portvale Sugar Factory would be excluded, and that churches would close except for funerals, limited to ten mourners, and weddings. The Leader of the Opposition, Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, Member for St. Michael West, did not oppose the Government’s management of the crisis but raised two queries on the Bill and asked that the Church be treated as an essential service. Further consideration was postponed.

The Minister of Health and Wellness, Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic, Member for the City of Bridgetown, moved the second reading of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which places isolation and other designated facilities under the Board and Management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital while the facility at Harrison’s Point was completed. The House appointed the Member for St. Michael West Central Chairman of Committees, and the Bill passed through Committee and its remaining stages.

After notice of a Resolution to grant \$400 200 000 under Supplementary Estimates No. 17, 2019-2020, the House went into Standing Finance Committee. Hon. R. R. Straughn explained that the sum for the Ministry of People

Empowerment and Elder Affairs, \$100 200 000, would ensure that monies did not lapse but were available for relief to vulnerable families through the Welfare Department, and that \$3 million for the Ministry of Finance was to support the operations of LIAT, since Barbados was still acquiring critical items. He announced that no vehicle stickers would be issued for vehicles expiring before April 15. The Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

Returning to the Emergency Management Bill, Mr. Marshall wound up and gave notice of an amendment

allowing the Cabinet to delegate to the Prime Minister. In Committee, Mr. G. P. Gooding-Edghill in the Chair, Mr. Marshall moved the amendment to clause 3, inserting a new sub-clause 6. Bishop Atherley objected that it extended prime ministerial power when the Cabinet could meet by Zoom; Mr. Marshall replied that a State of Emergency was to be declared, and clause 3 was passed. The Bill was read a third time and passed.

On the motion of Miss Bradshaw, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, the House was adjourned until April 17, 2020 at 10.00 a.m.