
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2022 – 2026

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House Assembly met in a meeting at the Parliament Buildings at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 13, 2022.

PRESENT

His Honour A. E. HOLDER, B.Sc. (Hons), MSW, LL.B. (Hons), L.E.C. (Speaker)

His Honour N. G. H. ROWE, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B., (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, Culture, Security, Public Service, CARICOM and the Development Commissions)

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, J.P., B. A.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS B.A., LL.B. (Senior Minister) (Minister of Energy and Business Development) LS-2

Mr. E. G. HINKSON, LL.B. (Hons), L.E.C., LL.M.

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A. (dist.) (Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance)

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons), L.E.C. (Deputy Prime Minister) (Senior Minister) (Minister of Transport, Works and Water Resources)

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Minister of Home Affairs and Information)

Hon. Ms. C. S. V. HUSBANDS, B.A. (Hons.), M.Sc. (Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Business Development)

Mr. R. A. THORNE, Q.C., LL.B., L.E.C., Dip. Theology

Hon. I. A. WEIR., M.B.A. (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Security)

Hon. A. R. FORFE, Rph. (Minister of Environment and National Beautification)

Hon. C. McD. GRIFFITH, B.Sc. (Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment)

Mr. P. R. PHILLIPS, J.P. (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL (Minister of Health and Wellness)

Hon. C. E. JORDAN, B.Sc. (Hons.) (Minister of Labour and Social Partnership Relations and the Third Sector)

Dr. the Hon. S. E. BROWNE, M.B.B.S (Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Wellness)

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.P.A. (Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs)

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, B.Sc., M.Sc. (Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Ms. M. K.-A. CADDLE, B.A., M.Sc.

Ms. T. N. S.-A. MOORE, M.B.A.

Hon. Miss K. S. MCCONNEY (Minister of Education, Technological and Vocational Training)

Hon. D. I. ISHMAEL, M.B.A., M.Sc. (Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology)

Mr. C. D. L. GIBBS

Mr. C. A. LAYNE, J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs)

Prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session. First, I want to welcome the Members of the Youth Parliament to this Honourable Chamber. I hope that you will find today's debate enthralling and will learn a lot from your experience. I mean a lot in terms of what to do and what not to do if and when you become and aspire to be a Member of this Chamber. There might be some things that you see happen from time to time. Some will be in your best interest, and some might not be as it relates to behaviour patterns exhibited by some of the Honourable Members of this Chamber. You are all adults, so you would know what to do and what not to do. I just want to wish you a pleasant day in this Chamber. After the lunch break and should there be any questions, feel free to ask the Members of this Chamber or myself.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Friday, August 12, 2022.

Hon. Ms. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes be confirmed subject to any omissions and/or corrections and/or observations.

Hon. D. I. ISHMAEL: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Response to the Auditor General Report, 2021.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 7 – RESOLUTION TO PROVE IN ACCORDANCE – WITH SECTION 4 OF THE DEBT CONVERSION (COUNTER-GUARANTEE) ACT, 2022-12 – THAT PARLIAMENT APPROVE (A) THE COUNTER-GUARANTEE ACT 2022-12 – THAT PARLIAMENT APPROVE (A) THE COUNTER-GUARANTEE – AGREEMENTS WITH THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK – AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY OF UP TO APPROXIMATELY

BDS\$300 MILLION TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO BUY BACK

OUR PRE-PAID MORE EXPENSIVE EXISTING DEBT ON THE TERMS

AND CONDITIONS OF THE AGREEMENTS

(B) THE CONSERVATION FUNDING AGREEMENT FOR

THE PURPOSE OF PAYING THE NEXT SAVINGS OVER 15 YEARS

TO A LOCAL TRUST WHICH WILL MANAGE CONSERVATION WORK

(C) THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION COMMITMENT

UNDER THE CONSERVATION AND SUBSIDIARY COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I beg your permission to read Order No.7 in conjunction with Order No.8 given that both Resolutions are inextricably linked.

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE BY YOUR HONOUR THE SPEAKER

(RECOMMITTED)

Mr. SPEAKER: I think it is important this House stand in one minute's silence in relation to the death of the former Queen of England and Leader of the Commonwealth. Let us stand and pay homage.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

(RESUMED)

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to commence this debate very clear in my own mind that just over four years ago when we came to office, we indicated that we would transform Barbados while we pursue the critical reforms that will see a return to proper fiscal management in order to ensure that we engineered an economic recovery that included all Barbadians. I recalled very clearly when we started this journey then, that we signaled to the country at the time that our debt as we found it was unsustainable and

very high. The extent to which Barbadians had seen and experienced a significant decay in the delivery of a range of public services was testimony to the fact that everything was out of sync as it relates to the macro-economy.

You would recall, Sir, the state of the South Coast Sewage Plant and the sewage flowing down the street which, incidentally, created in a real sense significant harm to the Graeme Hall Sanctuary.

As I try to contextualise what we are doing here this morning, and to remind Barbadians, Sir, of the journey that we are still on that this debate this morning for the Government of Barbados to execute what we shall refer to as a Debt For Nature Swap must be clearly understood in what has transpired in this country in recent times and what this Government intends to do to help transform the lives of ordinary citizens. Whilst there has been much debate, Sir, or should I say discourse, in recent times in relation to the Government needed to be transparent about our debt and how we should not do this or do that in relation to the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.), as I go about my daily task, Sir, of trying to right-size and economy against very, very, very significant head wind all, for the most part, driven by clear external factors.

Sir, I want to remind the country that this Administration will stay the course that we have charted since we took Office in May of 2018 and that there are things that will happen along the way that will create a little turbulence, that would cause you to pause and reassess how you need to navigate in very stormy and choppy waters and certainly, the whole world has experienced very choppy waters, particularly, within the last two years and Barbados is no exception.

Sir, this debate this morning is, not just historic in context of Barbados and how we treat to our debt. It is now only transformational, Sir, in the nature of what we have put together with the partners to come here, Sir, to execute this Debt For Nature Swap, but it is important that in the context for which people are saying the Government needs to put more information into the public which we have done under the Public Finance Management Act, but even before that, Sir, we have been publishing all of the related information in relation to the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (B.E.R.T.) plan with every review of under the previous extended fund facility, that information has been fully ventilated, Sir, in the context of the public, therefore, I say for the benefit of those within this space as well as those on the outside, Sir, that when it comes to transparency publishing of information, Sir, this Government is perhaps equal to none in relation to what we have done, not just in this Parliament, but in terms of what we have been able to do, certainly over the course of the last four years to be able to share and consult as widely as

possible with the widest possible of stakeholders to ensure that people stay the course.

Sir, I start here for some context. When we took Office, our public debt was estimated at just over \$17 billion, 176 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.). Let me repeat, Sir. We inherited \$17 billion as a government, 176 per cent of G.D.P, therefore, when these young persons, perhaps, here in the Public Gallery or on the outside, Sir, may pick up the daily newspapers recently and questions are being asked about how the Government of Barbados is going to repay the debt that we have borrowed. Yes, Sir, we have. I wish to remind the public, Sir, that as of the end of August, the public debt of Barbados stands at approximately \$13.4 billion. Sir, approximately, if you would do basic mathematics, one would come to the conclusion that \$13 billion is less than \$17 billion, therefore, when commentators are asking about how the Government of Barbados is going to repay debt, I do not recall any of the people who are asking the questions about how we are going to repay \$13.5 billion or so, being so vociferous when it was \$17 billion and climbing, but yet, the range of public services being provided in this country had been deteriorated to a point where Barbadians were fed up with the Government of the day. Sewerage was on the streets, garbage could not get collected, and you were keeping food in your fridge for weeks on end because you are not sure when the garbage trucks are going to turn up. People could not get to work on time and could not get back home from work on time because there were no buses available for people to be able to go about their ordinary business. Sir, people in this country could not get water. A large part of rural Barbados, but yet, Sir, our debt was climbing, therefore, the context of this debate is important because the Government of Barbados, Sir, this Government under the B.E.R.T Programme determined that we will do something to address the debt because 60 cents, Sir, 62 cents actually, out of every dollar that we collected as revenue in 2018, we had to service a debt. What is particularly more important though, is to understand that not just the \$13.5 billion or so, Sir, is less than \$17 billion, but the interest rates at which we are paying on the \$13.5 billion are significantly less than what we were paying, Sir, on the interest of \$17 billion and counting, therefore, from a debt sustainability perspective.

All of us incur debt at some point. If you want to buy a car, or if you want a refrigerator from in Bridgetown, or you would get a mortgage, we know that within our own personal lives that when we borrow money that we would like to borrow the money at the cheapest terms because it means that paying back that money allows us to have a little more in your pocket to do some of the other things that you would like to do. When this debate is put in its historical context, I want the public to understand that, yes, the Government of Barbados within the last two years

borrowed moneys, not because we wanted to borrow. Sir, when we started the B.E.R.T. programme we had a programme that was predicated on bringing our debt to G.D.P. down to 6 per cent by 2033, but COVID-19 happened. The economy lost \$2 billion in activity in 2020. Almost all of the tourism workers did not go to work for maybe two or three days for the most part of 2020, Sir. All of the taxi people in Barbados were impacted. All of the people who moved goods and services supplying tourism facilities were impacted in 2020 and as a result of that, Sir, the Government's revenue declined by \$600 million in 2020.

Now let me just say for those who are commenting and for the purpose and the benefit of the young people here this morning context is important because when the debt was 17 billion and climbing, they were those that said, "Do not restructure your debt. Send home 7,000 public servants. That will cure the problem." This government determined that we would take a different path and that we will focus as a critical part of our BERT programme to ensure that we can focus on people, Sir. Yes Sir, we had to do some initial restructuring. We had to regrettably lay off a few people but in laying off those people, unlike the 3,500 that was done in 2013/14 we put programmes in place to ensure that those persons can be re-trained, retooled as part of our "RERE" programme under the BERT programme to ensure that those persons would have a path back to sustainable work. That is what this government did. It is all about perspective and as I say the people who are commenting now about our ability to repay thirteen and a half billion or so did not, in my memory Sir were not concerned at the state of the economy in May 2018 when we took office. Now we know that we still have work to do so this is not a case of us patting ourselves on the back because we know that because of COVID- 19 there is still too many people in Barbados right now who only working three or four days a week and this government has been working to make sure that we can get the economy back up and running in a very hostile environment; driven largely again by external factors. Sir, you would recall that in the last 18 months, let me remind through you, the public that in the last 18 months we had to respond to the ash fall from the eruption of the volcano in St. Vincent.

Now, I want you to realise something Sir, it is a pattern here. If that was the last government they would still have ash in Barbados today because they let sewage flow in the streets for three years but this government determined that we were not going to let that define us and we put some people to work all across the length and breadth of Barbados to ensure that we can move the ash in the shortest possible time so that we can get this Barbados economy back up and running. As soon as we thought that we were passed that we had the freak storm and then Hurricane Elsa in July inflicting damage to almost 2,000 homes in this country and who had to respond. The

Government because people were again impacted, and I know based on their history that they would have left those people out in the wind. We took a decision that we were going to focus on how we could get these things repaired and rebuilt as quickly as possible. Admittedly sir, it has not gone smoothly but the reality is we are still committed to being able to solve that, but I want the public to understand that required additional cash resources that the government had to find to be able to respond to those persons because at any point in your history a government has to be able to respond to the needs of its people. Sir, as you know shortly after that Hurricane Elsa passed, we had the Delta surge, cases in the summer and every time as our public health posture was at the time, we were obviously given the intensity of the virus we separated people from the population in order for them to limit the spread. That cost money as the COVID response cost money and therefore, yes, we borrowed money, but we did not borrow money because we were as my grandmother would say that we were "wutless". We borrowed money to ensure that we could respond to the needs of the people at the moment. Equally, with the clear focus as is the case with respect to the reconstruction of the houses capital works Sir, to be able to hire people across the length and breadth of Barbados. To put them to work in repairing these homes for ordinary Barbadians and therefore, yes in the short term our debt has increased. It has but at thirteen and a half billion at significantly low interest rates our focus now as the government of Barbados is to ensure that we can get this economy back up and running. I would love for the war to end tomorrow so that things can normalise and we can get back to some sense of normalcy so that the cost of living which, regrettably as I indicated earlier those persons that are working three and four days which as you know Sir, if you're working three days that is a 40 per cent decline in your income. Four days is 20 per cent and therefore we need to get those persons back to a full work week because with the cost of living being driven externally by all of these things that are happening outside of Barbados those persons are clearly feeling the pinch, but it is not feeling the pinch of because of anything the government of Barbados has done. We have put as much as we can, mitigation efforts to be able to help ease the squeeze as you would say for Barbadians but we operate in a world that is very hostile, very dynamic and Barbados operating in this space we will be impacted but this government, I am proud to say we have responded when the call has been made for us to respond and whilst we cannot do everything for everybody at the same time we have responded and I believe that our track record speaks for itself, but I do not want anybody in the public to fear our ability to repay the debt that we have now.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: What we must focus on is how we are all going to put the best efforts to ensure that we can grow this economy from top to bottom and that people are included all the way through this specific

process so, I leave that there for the moment because context is important for us to understand that the government in executing its public policy requires financing to be able to do that which we need to do. Whether or not we like it whilst our revenue projections are just over 3 billion dollars for the fiscal year the reality is that I do not start April 1st with 3 billion dollars sitting down in the Treasury that I can just decide that we will do this. We have to collect the money every day, every month in order to plan our expenditure just like every household, every person that works; you know that you work in advance, effectively you are paid in arrears. It is the same with the government and therefore in order to do things you must be able to raise some level of financing or debt to be able to do that whilst you are able to plan the rest of your affairs. Thus, let me come back to this Resolution here very quickly because it is important that against that backdrop and what we have done in relation to restructuring our debt in 2018, the domestic debt in 2018 and the foreign debt in 2019 that, that created space for us to buy the trucks, to buy the buses, to fix the issues on the South Coast, to be able to fix roads that were long in need of repair for some time and that work continues, to be able to address a lot of the income tax arrears that people were owed, a lot of the monies that the last government incurred because they encouraged a lot of small business people to provide services and then did not pay them and outside of the 17 billion that I told you about officially as debt there was just about 1.2 billion dollars in unpaid bills to ordinary Barbadians that this Government over the course of the last four years have had to settled. You would recall, Sir, in 2018 when I did the Debt Restructuring Bill, there was the Series "F" Bonds where at that time, based on the information that we had, we set up that structure to repay persons over a period of 42 months, starting April 1, 2019, to the end of this month September 2022. This represents 42 months for which that Series "F" structure would have repaid the arrears the last Government had left for us to deal with; the majority of which were ordinary Barbadian businesses from whom they had gotten services and refused to pay them, but this Government did that all the way through the pandemic and at the end of this month we can say that that \$1.2 billion owed to Barbadians, this Barbados Labour Party Government would have honoured that commitment that we said to the people under that Debt Restructuring. Sir, while I accept that circumstances may have changed because of the pandemic, when you are talking about debt transparency, what this Government has done is debt transparency because we have determined that we will not do that which the last Government did to people, that is, to encourage the people to provide goods and services to the Government, then the Government does not pay. Therefore, when they are talking about debt transparency, let them talk about that because this Government has tried its best to restore trust and integrity to the process with respect to the management of the public finances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in this Debt-for-Nature-Swap, both the Honourable Members for St. Michael South and South Central have been a part of this journey with me since we announced that we would restructure our debt. Sir, you will forgive me if I use both of them interchangeably, but the reality is that when we restructured our debt we understood and gave a commitment in our Manifesto that there were certain things we needed to do. We contemplated that once our debt was restructured, that we would have been able to do this Debt-for-Nature-Swap in the traditional sense which would allow us to pursue some of these marine conservation efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me very quickly explain what this would mean in the context of our debt management and what we are doing. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am going back to transparency and also for the benefit of the young people in this Honourable Chamber and those listening, when people talk about transparency sometimes it is important that we understand that when information is published... Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of the public this is available on Parliament website, so while it may be a nice fat book, it is important that Barbadians understand that the Government of Barbados does not hide anything in relation to debt. Sir, as you know, every year we come to this Parliament for Estimates and in Appendix "C" of the Estimates we publish every single loan that the Government of Barbados has on its books everyone is published in this book. Also, the terms, interest rates, et cetera, and all are published in this book, so there is nothing to surprise anybody about whatever the Government is doing, or about Government hiding anything, hence, everything is here. Therefore, I am saying to those commentators to take some time and read, instead of getting in the newspapers and writing things to give the impression that the Government is hiding anything. Mr. Speaker, Sir, every single loan is outlined in Appendix "C".

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I make that point because in this Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue within the amortisation line (and for the benefit of the public simply means that you are repaying the principal -- money borrowed) - as well as the interest payments (because both are separated) every bit of interest is accounted for in this book; every bit of amortisation or payment of principal for the year is accounted for in this book and so for the purpose of Debt-for-Nature-Swap I want to get the public to understand that if, for example, the total interest supposed to be paid in any given year is \$300 million, that money is accounted for here. If nothing changes this book allows the Government of Barbados - because we lay it in Parliament, it is debated here and passed and gives us the authority to pay that \$300 million to whomever holds the bonds, so in Appendix "C" anyone having any bonds will be paid interest. If nothing changes it means that we will pay that \$300 million in the year.

Sir, from a budgetary perspective, it means that if we want to allocate moneys for Housing, I will have to find moneys outside of that \$300 million to give to Housing. It means that if the Barbados Water Authority needs money urgently to have something fixed, it therefore means that I would have to find money outside of that \$300 million to be able to do that, because these moneys have to be paid, as they are committed to in this book. If for some reason when we have to pay this money, there are no resources available to do anything else, then it therefore means that you would have to look within your budget and make adjustments elsewhere in order to make those resources available. Therefore, for example, we are committed to paying that \$300 million in interest.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what these two Resolutions are going to allow us to do, and it is very interesting. We have already committed to paying the interest. Therefore, the Debt-for-Nature-Swap in which we are engaging with Credit Suisse Bank and CIBC (Barbados Limited) is to allow us to buy back a portion of the existing debt at a lower interest rate, but since we have already been committed to repaying, for example, \$300 million in interest, in exchange for buying back the debt at a lower interest rate, the commitment is that we will divert a portion of the existing interest payment to do some marine conservation work -- critical work -- that is required to be able to help sustain and build out the Blue Economy in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it does not impact the budget of the Ministry of Environment and National Beautification as these are specific commitments that we are doing, and so for example it means that out of that interest payment we might be able to get about \$20 million or \$30 million, depending on how much space is being created, to be able to divert into that space. Sir, from a conceptual perspective, what we are doing here is that we are now paying interest at a certain rate, we are going to buy it back at a lower rate, Sir, and therefore the savings is what we are saying we are going to divert into the local trust, the Barbados Environmental and Sustainability Fund, over the next 15 years to help deal with a number of very critical marine and conservation commitments. Sir, I will allow later the Honourable Members for Christ Church West Central and St. Michael South to elaborate on those commitments. What this transaction allows us to do is use the existing debt payments that we must make. Sir, as you know, when you put it in here and say that you are doing it for X, you really cannot turn around and do Y with it; so just for the benefit of the young people here today, the reason we are here to do this Resolution is because as it stands, Sir, the law says we have to pay our debt in full whenever it becomes due.

Therefore, when we talk about diverting debt now, we are not talking about anybody carrying away any

money or anything like that; we are talking about the permission that this Parliament has granted when we came here about a month ago and we passed the Debt Conversion and Counter-Guarantee Act. The notion of diverting debt, therefore, is not to be in any way associated with anything negative. We have an agreement that we have made that is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank in relation to The Nature Conservancy as partners within the Guarantee, and this allows us to use those debt savings over the next 15 years to do additional work within the marine and environmental space. Therefore, as a responsible Government, Sir, we have been looking for avenues to execute this but let me just stick a pin here very quickly regarding the reason it has taken four years. Sir, this technical conversation started when we announced that we were going to restructure our debt because we knew an opportunity would arise.

Ordinarily, Sir, when a country restructures its debt, it usually would say, "You are in trouble, you need some help," so the signal to the market is something that is less than confident. Sir, you would also recall that we restructured our domestic debt at the end of September of 2018, and we launched the debt exchange in October, and everything was wrapped up nicely and neatly within a two-to three-month period; all the terms were agreed. Sir, by the time we settled the external debt in 2019, as you would recall, we had already met the primary target of 3.5 per cent surplus at the end of March 2019, and we were well on our way to achieving the six per cent primary surplus which, as part of the original BERT (Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation) programme, were the critical targets to be met. As one would expect, Sir, having come to office, the truth is that while we were new to Government, the people on the Other Side of the table were still doubtful about whether Barbados and, certainly, this Government would be able to do that which they said they wanted to do. Therefore, as we continued to perform and do that which we said we would do, the International Monetary Fund in publishing its reviews confirmed or validated as an independent arbiter that Barbados was doing what we said we would have done. The confidence of the external creditors was quite extraordinary.

Normally when you conclude your debt restructuring, people want to get back their money fast, so they are prepared to sell at a discount very quickly in order to get out. People's focus in a debt restructuring when things are looking a little queasy is that they may say, "I will take 80 cents on the dollar or 75 cents on the dollar to get out of this because I am not sure when I am going to get back my money." Bond prices in a normal circumstance for debt restructuring will also settle somewhere in the middle to lower 80s depending on your credit quality and your history, Sir. The truth is, Sir, I believe in my heart of hearts that even though it took longer than we would have liked to finish the external debt restructuring, in the end it actually

turned out to be a positive thing because by the time we had finished, the external creditors had seen what Barbados said it would do happening, so our bonds continued to trade at par. For the benefit of the young people, “at par” means a dollar for a dollar.

Sir, at one point the debt was trading at 101 to 102, which meant that people were actually preparing to pay more to get some of what Barbados had on the market. The confidence was based on what we were doing at the time, that people were prepared to pay more for these very Euro bonds which we have come here today to buy back. They were prepared to pay more in order to get a piece of the action. If the Honourable Member for St. Thomas had a piece of the Euro bond, Sir, and the Honourable Member for St. James South wanted to get some, she would have to give her above par or premium in order for the Honourable Member for St. Thomas to relinquish that bond. Sir, that is not a normal thing. When we finished the debt restructuring, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South would tell you, we would meet and we would be trying to figure out how we would do this thing, because the whole idea of being able to do this thing was to be able to buy back the debt at a lower price to create those savings and then to be able to execute what is called a debt-for-nature swap.

We had to start afresh, Sir, because all through the COVID pandemic the debt continued to trade at 101, 100 or 99 and maybe 98 and back up to 101 or 100 for the most part. Only when the war started this year in February did we see the bond prices go down, but then as things started to level out with uncertainty the bond prices now have come back up to around 96 or 97, Sir. Again, this was nothing that Barbados did. This was all to do with the fact that interest rates were rising and there was uncertainty within the context of the international market. We had to go to the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) and TNC (The Nature Conservancy) and it has taken about two years of back-and-forth trying to get the structure right in order to be able to come up with this innovative mechanism that allows for them to do what is called the counter-guarantee and to be able to put us in a position today where we can come to this Parliament, do this Resolution and buy back, through Credit Suisse and CIBC, that portion of the debt here, the Euro bond as well as the Series E bonds from here.

Sir, in effect, we can issue a new instrument that will allow us to use, as I said, the existing debt payments in terms of those savings, which we estimate will be somewhere between US\$30 million and US\$40 million over the next 15 years. It all depends on the exact rate upon closing on September 19 or 20; the exact rate that everything is closed at will determine what those savings will be over the next 15 years. Once we close this transaction, over the next 15 years the Barbados

Environmental and Sustainability Fund will receive those debt service payments as they come due under the circumstance here. As they come due, those savings will then go into the Fund. Sir, this is not a Government fund. This is a fund in which, yes, the Government of Barbados has representation, but you have The Nature Conservancy having representation on it, as well as the University of the West Indies, so this is not a government fund.

This is a fund in which, yes, the Government of Barbados has representation, but you have major the Nature Conservancy, having representation on it, and the University of the West Indies representation on it, so the this is not a Government fund. This is a fund that is intended to be able to execute very specific marine conservation and environmental commitments, over and above that which the Ministry of Environment and its agencies will do in the normal budgetary process, and therefore allowing us to be able to use in a very creative way existing debt payments to do more within building out the blue economy space. Sir, therefore, it is a transformational moment for the country, because we would love to see this type of thing right across the region. As we have to respond to the climate crisis it means that for the moment I do not have to hurt my head about where we are going to find the money to do these things, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South every year would come and say, Minister we need to find some money to this and we say well we will have to do the SWOP, because the money is going to come from the SWOP. We had to delay and delay, and then COVID hit, but we are in a position now that we know where the resources will come from to be able to accelerate a lot of the work, and I think Barbados was the first country to announce we had a Ministry with the blue economy. The reality is that this now will help accelerate a lot of activities within that space. I know that there were plenty consultations done pre-COVID, those will continue as per usual, but the reality is that this is a transformation moment for the country. Therefore, I shall repeat it wherever I go, because it is important to understand when people are saying that the Government is not hiding anything. Therefore, for the young people listening, take the time to just do a little bit of research. Do not worry about the two-minute sound bites on social media. Sir, if you want to know what is going on in the World, you have to take a little time to come to get the right source of information. There is nothing wrong with asking questions, because the truth is, I do not understand everything, and if I do not understand something I am going to ask a question, because if something is not settling in my own mind, I am not going to feel comfortable committing to something. Therefore, the Government accepts that people will have questions, because this is new, and this is not something that happens every day in the World. This Government, in promising that we will transform the way that things are done in Barbados, it actually means that you have to do something

new, because if you keep doing the same things that the last Government was doing, then you know what would have happened to this country if we had found ourselves in that situation with COVID besetting us. Sir, you have to do something new. This Government, in charting a course to get out of the situation that we find ourselves in, we have to upgrade our systems and improve things, but you have to do things differently and do new things. Sir, this is part of the new things that we are doing in this country to bring back some measure of respectability to the name of Barbados.

Now, Sir, I will go through very quickly about the terms and conditions and I will also speak to the Special Loans which we are also doing as a cognate debate. Sir, BBD\$150 million will be bought back by First Caribbean International Bank as part of the \$300 million buyback. Sir, BBD\$150 million with respect to a Credit Suisse in order to buyback and prepay existing higher costs debt to utilise the saving to finance marine conservation in Barbados.

Hence, again we took a unique approach, because ordinarily when you do these things you only have one investment bank that will normally do it. however, we said that we are going to take a bit on the foreign side, let the international agency do that, which is Credit Suisse, on the domestic side, First Caribbean International Bank, right here in Barbados, a local bank, in order to execute this.

Now, what is important to understand is that there is domestic debt and there is foreign debt. The critical part of this is that whilst we are engaging two entities, there is actually going to be foreign exchange savings for the country, because as I said, the diversion of the foreign debt component the euro bond, to go into the sustainability fund, actually means that we do not have to use foreign exchange to repay the creditors in the original and therefore the country actually saves foreign exchange by diverting those funds into the local trust for us to be able to accelerate the conservation efforts. Therefore, it is important to understand that the way we have structured this will actually benefit the country over the next 15 years, and even though it may be small relative to the overall foreign exchange that the country has to use, every instance where we can do more of this, it means that the country will be better off over the long term.

Sir, as I said, it is a Credit Suisse USD\$150 million term loan. There is a 42-month grace period. As it says here, the maturity date is September 2037, which is 15 years, with 24 semiannual payments of USD\$3.125 million. There is a margin of 0.95 per cent and this margin here speaks to the spread over and above the fixed rate which is 4.15 per cent at the disbursement date. Sir, for the First Caribbean International Bank, there is the same grace period of 42 months, the term is 15 years, with 24 semiannual payments of BBD\$6.25 million, 3.25 per cent

interest rate which is fixed, and obviously other fees for arranging the loan is actually there.

Therefore, there is nothing out of the ordinary, but significant savings and depending on where the final buyback comes will determine how much of the savings, we will actually be able to advance the transaction.

As it relates to the Inter-American Development Bank and The Nature Conservancy, when we started this process, we had contemplated just USD\$100 million when the conversation started. It is interesting that as I speak, there is a narrative in relation to how confident people are in Barbados from the outside, but there are some amongst us who do not seem to share the same view. Sir, as you know, when people are prepared to put their money where their mouth is, then you understand the level of confidence that they have. Hence, when the conversation started, the Inter-American Development Bank was going to guarantee USD\$75 million and The Nature Conservancy was going to put USD\$25 million, totaling USD\$100 million.

Now, for the benefit of the public, the Inter-American Development Bank is rated triple A, and The Nature Conservancy is rated double A. People in Barbados may recall when Barbados used to be double A at one point and that seem like so long ago, and had not for the pandemic, I am sure that we would have been much closer to getting back there, but that is a subject for another day. However, it is important to understand that credit ratings matter, because when we get those 23 downgrades, it almost seemed as though every month we were getting a downgrade. When you are getting those downgrades, it really matters, because it speaks to your credit quality.

Nevertheless, these two agencies, throughout the course of our discussions and seeing what Barbados had done, even in the middle of the pandemic, earlier this year they agreed that they will augment the original commitment and therefore, the IDB now has agreed to guarantee US\$100 million and TNC US\$50 million. Therefore, this is how we have been able to come here now to even increase over and above the original forecast savings to get to between US \$30 million and US \$40 million depending on the final range of the buy-back, so that we can actually realize more savings. The truth is, Sir, that you cannot want a more expression of higher confidence in what this Government has been able to do not just from a financial perspective but as we have responded to ensure that persons needs are addressed as best as we could, given the circumstances, the international community looking at Barbados and the way it has been governed under the leadership of the Prime Minister for the last four years and few months, there is a substantive difference in the mindset of people in Barbados today than it was when we took office four-and-a-half years ago because there was doubt.

People have seen the track record of this Government, Sir, and therefore these terms and conditions before this Chamber today, there has been an evolution in us getting here which is really a response to our stewardship of being a responsible Government managing in extreme circumstances. Therefore, this narrative is two-fold in my view. There are people who would wish for some reason that the facts are not the facts. I do not know why you would want after the last two years for people to continue to suffer. I do not know why you would want that. The other part of this is that in spite of the challenges I mentioned, this Government has soldiered on. Our record has been a sharp contrast to those who are writing in the

newspaper daily which is their right, but I wonder sometimes how the editors perhaps may not be as forceful or analytical for that matter because as you know everything is connected.

When we come to Parliament next year and produce this document in March, you will see in it specifically, yes, debt service but by the Estimates next year you will see debt service going into the Environmental and Sustainability Fund. The debt service going there, Sir, is not going to cost Barbadians any more money. We are not going into people's pockets for more money to do that, Sir. Therefore, we must understand that we are trying our very best. Yes, we had to borrow to respond to the circumstances that we had. Yes, we have some issues to resolve in relation to the last 18 months and how that has really offset not just people but has created a bit of fiscal imbalance for Government because of the aggressive demand for cash. Therefore, we did not plan for that, Sir.

I forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, that we also re-capitalised the NIS last summer too because you would remember that those people who were laid off in 2020 had to get unemployment benefits by law. As you know, Sir, I think it was Section 32 or 33 of the NIS Act that stated when there is a shortfall, who has to put in the money, Sir? The Government. Therefore, when you have such an aggressive demand for cash, you have to find ways not just of responding but right sizing your public finances, Sir. Therefore, this debate this morning, while to some may seem out of place, the reality is that we are continuing our commitment to ease the burden on ordinary people and finding innovative ways of using what you already have.

My grandmother would tell me, "Use what you got, skipper." Using what we have now, Sir, we are able to unlock now opportunities within the blue economy space that I believe thousands of ordinary Barbadians once we expose them to it will take those opportunities up.

Therefore, this transaction in my view like how engaging with the IMF provides a catalytic role for multinationals banks to come in and help support

programmes, I believe that this specific transaction here today will provide those monies over the next 15 years and that this too will be a catalyst for us to access more resources to deal with the marine space or environmental commitments as we respond to the challenges of the climate crisis.

This will be a catalyst for being able to access more funds. Therefore, we are doing this not to pat ourselves on the back but to make sure that as we engineer an updated BERT Plan taking cognizance of the fact that we have taken a hard cuff in our guts over the last two years because of COVID-19 but it did not take the winds out of our sails, Sir. We just paused, collected ourselves and charted a different course on the basis of what we were facing, but the mission remained the same, Sir. The mission remained the same.

Therefore, these two Resolutions together I believe will prove in time to be significant catalyst for how the Government of Barbados is going to continue to lead not just on our international advocacy but as we said, we are not just talking the talk.

We are walking the walk by being able to show people to just give us the chance. I would like that the next three years nothing to happen in the world. It is just my wish. I would just like to be able to get on with doing things so that people's minds can be put at ease. However, I know that the world does not operate so. Hence, whatever we face we must continue to be innovative and creative, working with all our partners in good faith. Sir, at this stage when we finish this transaction my part is basically finished. I just have to give them the money and they will get the money. We have done quite a bit of work over the last two years in particular. I really want to take this opportunity now to thank, through the Attorney General, his officers in the Solicitor General Chambers because the back and forth to get these documents done as you would appreciate since you have a guarantee with the IDB and the TNC, you are Working with the two banks and therefore the lawyers in the middle trying to make sure that all of the I's are dotted and T's are crossed to ensure that everything is in place.

I really want to thank those officers for working very aggressively over the course of the last few months in particular, to be able to put us in this position. As it relates to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC), drafting these Resolutions and getting everything in place for us to do this today, I thank them as well, Sir. I also thank personally, the officers in the Ministry of Environment and the Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU) and the Roofs to Reefs Programme. While there was a lot of back and forth in relation to the commitments, I believe that what we have brought here with respect to milestones and how we will achieve them would be a transformational element in terms

of how Barbados can become again a world leader with respect to environmental advocacy.

I also want to thank my officers in the Ministry of Finance too because without their drive, the officers in the Public Investment Unit who coordinated with everybody to get this done did tremendous work in the background that certainly over the course of the last six weeks or so when everything was just coming together and we just needed to make sure that everything was in place, Sir, was tremendous but we still had other work to do and we are still doing other work, therefore, as I look at the work that is to be done going forward, I say to the officers that the hard work that you have undertaken to bring us to this stage is good work, but now “the proof in the pudding is in the eating”, as they say, therefore, in achieve these environmental commitments, the whole of Barbados really has to get on board and be engaged. I know the ministries, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South in particular, lead a series of consultations with a range of stakeholders and he would be able to articulate, Sir, some of the issues, the concerns and the positives in terms of where you are at. The reality is, Sir, as you know, sargassum seaweed continues to be a threat, the reef infrastructure needs to be addressed and the fisheries, all of these things need to be clearly understood and managed sustainably, therefore, as we contemplate, Sir, a new vision of being able to build out the blue economy space, the work within that has to be led by the officers within the ministry environment in collaboration, as we said, with the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.) and others who will be brought on board. We would provide the resources and, as I said, Sir, this transaction will act as a catalyst for more resources to be brought into the space for use to be able to get this done.

Sir, the terms, or conditions of both Resolutions are clear for all to see. It allows us to be able to access already available resources, if you like, to divert to do something else and that diversion will be adequately reflected in these estimates so that when they come next year and ask where the money has gone, because I want the youngsters to understand that when you look into the numbers here and you look at the forward estimates, you would see a certain number because if nothing changes, the forward estimates remain the same, based on the existing trajectory. Next year when you see the foreign estimates change, they will only change because we have come to Parliament and passed these Resolutions. They will be reflected in the next round of these estimates, for the mischievous person out there who is talking about debt transparency and the like to understand that this Government, unlike the last, and I know there will be an opportunity for us to discuss matters in relation to the Auditor General Report at a later day, but when it comes to these matters, Sir, I believe that anybody who would come to This Place and audit what we have done would be proud to know that we have done it the right

way in relation to getting these matters resolved. Sir, these Resolutions, I believe, would be transformational in helping us to be able to better manage our resources. Sir, I could not be prouder to stand here this morning and to share a few thoughts with Honourable Members and the public in relation to what the Government continues to do to bring about further fiscal discipline, order to the management of the public finances, and I hope that the young people who have been here today, perhaps at some point in the future, would be able in 15 years’ time, Sir, to be able to engineer another Debt For Nature Swap or some other swap as we hand the baton over to them in This Place in order to make sure that Barbados continues to thrive and to remain on a sustainable footing.

With those very few words, Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

(A rousing round of applause)

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

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin, of course, by supporting the Resolutions, but also by thanking the Honourable Member who just spoke for the thorough way in which he approached both the financial components and with the level of clarity that he spoke to the environmental commitments as well. I feel as if my contribution now could be a lot shortened considering the justice that the Minister did to both components of this Resolution.

Before I begin, I would obviously want to thank the Ministry of Finance, in particular the Minister in the Ministry of Finance. I would want to thank the former Minister in the Ministry who was responsible for a lot of the economic matters, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, who did a lot of work with me in the initial phases and I now would wish to thank the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central who is Minister of Environment and National Beautification and in whose capable hands the success of this project will now lie and I have no doubt, Sir, that he will do an amazing job in delivering to the people of Barbados.

This particular Debt Swap, Sir, means a lot to me. Sir, I must tell you as the Minister who was responsible for a lot of the work in the initial phases, it was one of the things that I had hoped to be able to deliver during my term as Minister. In a three-and-a-half-year period I was not able so to do, but that I am filled with joy and glee this morning because we have done for the people of Barbados, particularly the people who make their living on the sea, by the sea, through the sea, we are doing justice to their cause here this morning. For me, this has been a long time coming but I knew that someday a change was going to

come. Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to be here and to be a part of this conversation because when I explain in a little bit more detail this process, you would see this has not been easy and it speaks to the resilience and the commitment of the Government, and I am happy to be a part of it. If I were to title my very short speech, I think the Minister has done very well, it would be, Sir, that we today would be speaking on the principle, the process, the product, the promises, and the people. It is important to understand all five of these components because it sets the context and the tone for what we set out to do and how we were going to do it, why we were going to do it and the way the people would benefit at the end of the process. Sir, in the principle, you understood as a Member of this Government, but as a man who has distinguished himself and conducts himself with probity and integrity, the principle that drove us was that at the end of the day, we were not going to place a future burden on the people of Barbados and that we were going to conduct ourselves with a certain sense of decorum and integrity in all of our matters and in all of our affairs. I must tell you, Sir, that when we came to this Ministry there was a view held by many on the international scene, and we seem to have forgotten because 2018 we came and we restored confidence to the country, but many people seemed to have forgotten that even our international brand was so badly damaged that people were afraid to do business with Barbados and that through the immediate leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister of this country we were able to put Barbados back on steady footing, Sir. People have forgotten and I feel it is incumbent on us in this room to ensure that people no longer forget because what we had to do to get to this point is herculean and it did not need to be so. The fact is that as I listen to Honourable Member who just spoke before me and the way that people are criticising a debt that is less than the debt that they left. They are criticising us for a debt that is less than the debt that they left. In circumstances where the reason that they found themselves in debt was mismanagement and the reason that we found ourselves with a little more debt than we had planned to because proper management. It is inconceivable to me and the arrogance of it the total gall for persons who come and argue about these things Sir when the reality is also this and I have a feeling if you are causeless you should talk less and I can think of no cause that the former government can properly associate themselves with whether it is in the social space, whether it is in the environmental space, whether it is in agriculture and when you think about it worse yet, so in this case you had no argument but worse yet when you think about what they did in the financial space and the embarrassment and the shame in the education space. Let us not forget and I feel as if we must remind the country because in every possible area the former government put us in this position. They put us in this position Sir and through some very difficult waters then made worse by COVID, ash fall and all the different things that we would have mentioned before we

found ourselves having to deal with some very difficult circumstances but built on a principle of good governance and integrity and a principle that seeks to put people first at all times. We said who we were when we did the Covenant of Hope. We said what we would stand for when we did the Covenant of Hope. This should not surprise anybody. In fact, our 2018 manifesto spoke to the Blue Economy. Our 2018 manifesto spoke to a debt swap. Take a look at it so we did not stumble on this. This is not something that we woke up and say look we got debt 'leh' we. This was a strategic move. A passion project yes but a strategic move. A move that was meant to place Barbados back into the international landscape in a way that we could feel proud. I had heard Barbados' name being called before we came into this place. I had heard people saying Guyana would not even take the Barbados dollar or we forgot. I had heard people saying that when we go to meetings overseas the Ministers cannot be found to show up and they went and spent the day gallivanting or have we forgotten and that when we came into office we restored not only the dollar but we restored the faith of the international community, the regional community, the local community and beyond restoring it Barbados now leads the Caribbean as a beacon of hope lest we forget and I feel in the next few years because the Opposition seems to think as my mother use to say that my tongue "lock on pun the top of my mouth" that we cannot speak and that we are so focused on doing the people's business that we forgot that we are in a political game. That the problem with the DLP when they are in office that they only understand the political game and we came, and we do what we have to do. We manage the economy. We focus on the people but if they want to fight well bring it because I know I stand on the side of justice and that what we are doing is fundamentally right. When we started this debt swap the guidance that I got from the Prime Minister wasn't much. The PM didn't say, "I want this and this and this". The PM said the people of this country must not have a burden placed on them going forward. That was it. Minister do not place a greater burden on this country. Go and seek the best deal for Barbados and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance just laid it out. We had thought that this was going to be a simple process but let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, Sir when I sat down to do this debt swap the history of these debt swaps made it seem as if countries in the position Barbados was in would go out. You owe so many people like if I owe you a dollar, but you know I don't have any money and another man came and say, "Don't worry bout kirk dollar I gun give you 85 cents." You know I would never pay you that dollar. Thus, you would take the man's 85 cents. That is the principle. We had thought people would say well Barbados is in this position and somebody else would take less money for the debt, but true to the work of the Prime Minister the Honourable Ministers in the ministry who came back and led economic recovery that was supposed to be long term and confidence came back to the country almost immediately and while that is good for the economic

component of it, it was not good for me. What that mean was that nobody was taking Barbados' debt at a reduced rate so it was not a case that you would say, "Oh I just give you a dollar." and another pay you 85 cents. You said No I have confidence that I would be able to get my dollar from this man I am sticking with this man. People decided we know Barbados will be able to pay its debt. We are sticking with Barbados. The same people who would not have lend Barbados a cent previously because of the way the country was managed. We restored confidence immediately to the calculation of how we were going to go forward.

Sir, so when I sat down to do this, there were some things in my mind that were clear. We could not leave a future burden on the country and also that we must never sell the birth right of Barbadians to anybody for anything because thirty pieces of silver would never be worth it, and we were going to protect the ocean space but in a way that it would have to be that the people owned the ocean. The people own the benefit of it. There is a poem by Frank Collymore that would guide me when I was the Minister responsible for Maritime. It was called 'A Hymn to the Sea' and in his beginning, the opening line he says, "All who live on small islands we must always remember the sea." For all of us in this room whether we think we are in different ministries or not, whether we think that what is important is in the social sector, the finance sector, if we do not get what is happening in the ocean space right all of us are in trouble because this is really an existential threat. Barbados may not exist if we do not get a lot of these issues pertaining to climate change made right and so when we look at the leadership of the Prime Minister in this process. To be able to chart the path for Barbados not because the Prime Minister wants to go on the international stage and make these points. This is important. Barbados potentially, like other Small Island Developing States could potentially not be here. If we allow the sea to rise at a rate that is unchecked, temperatures to continue to soar. Most of the fish in our ocean are already at the maximum thermal capacity meaning that a slight increase in the temperature would see us losing everything. Throw the fishermen out of whack. The coral dead. Tourists are not coming. This is really a very serious issue so what has been the process? How did we get here? I must tell you that when the debt swap was put in the manifesto and our work on the Blue Economy, I never thought I would be the person who had to do it so when I came in, I had a period of immediate learning. I had to learn certain things I mean and fast to find myself up to scratch. I am thankful to my colleagues because we were learning together and many of them gave me some guidance on a number of important things and immediately when we reached out to the Nation Conservancy (TNC) we were able to begin that conversation about what is important in the ocean space and how do we frame this discussion on the debt swap. The debt swap was going to be for me a salvation. I remember there was an article written when I became Minister by a

person who was said to be associated with the Other Side. He says not but the article says with all the things in this Blue Economy and all of these things the Minister wants to do, and the government is promising they will never be money made available to be able to do them. Part right. Part wrong. Cause our limited resources as a Small Island State our resources are finite so we obviously did not have resources to do all of those things and the moment any of the buildings in here, the Honourable Member will tell you the moment you put anything in the sea you are talking about three, four and five times the cost of things it is very expensive work in the ocean. Hence, a lot of the things we are doing would be costly. I remember going to the first and second Estimates and meeting with the Prime Minister and my good friend who sits to my right here and saying that these are the things I want to do, and this is how much I think it will cost and put it into the Budget and I did. Only to be told "Minister, you will get your money when you conclude this debt swap. You will get the money to do the things you need to do from the debt swap to be able to help drive them," because the Government does not have to do everything. The Government has to set the framework within which things can be done but the Government does not have to be able to do everything, so when I started talking about this marine spatial plan and marine protected areas and what that was going to cost, we were keeping them together as a result of the debt swap. Sir, because I never got the debt swap in my time, needless to say I never got the money, but I am pleased that we now have it and that the Honourable Minister of the Environment will be able to do some transformative, innovative work in the blue economy that will redound to people.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Sir, the Government really over-performed, and we have a way -- Barbadians and this Government -- of being very humble. We do not like to boast about the things we have achieved but the Government over-performed in terms of the management of the economy in those early days and in that early stage, Sir. The Government performed so well that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central who just spoke would tell you that our debt was trading above par. This is so unprecedented. In most cases when you find yourself with an economy that was as fractured as ours was when we came in, where the former Government left the economy tattered and broken. We would have expected to be able to make those deals, but we did not. When you say that your debt was trading above par, it meant that instead of people saying to me -- back to our analogy -- that they would take 85 cents for the dollar, people said, "If you want that dollar, I know that the Honourable Member will pay." You have to give me a dollar plus. You have to pay me more than what is owed on the principle.

This was unprecedented, so you would have found that in Belize they were able to secure their debt swap quickly because the same faith was not given to Belize. When Belize was trading, I think they went in at 55 or 60 cents to the dollar. We were in a similar position but because of the way we managed the debt in those early days, Sir, our position just shifted. This would not be on the cards if we had kept the way with the former Administration, Sir. I found myself without those resources to do what I wanted to do, and we therefore found ourselves without a model. The model that was promised as the debt swap model -- the one I knew and which I had spent my first year studying so well -- did not work for Barbados. Barbados performed in a way that made that model irrelevant, because that model depended on the weakness, almost, and the loss of confidence by the international community in your bonds, but that did not happen for us. We had to go back to the drawing board, and when we did so -- this point is critical -- there was not anything that we had built it on. The model which you see that is before the country and the Parliament now, the model that we are using as our debt conversion basis, is a model that was developed in Barbados that will now be used for the rest of the world, Sir, to be able to do things like this. This is a home-grown, indigenous programme that will bring Barbados back to its position on the top, Sir. This is so transformative.

Many people had thought that when the debt swap in its original manifestation and iteration did not occur, we would not have been able to get anything done at all. Sir, I must tell you I had nights when I felt a little despondent myself because I could not understand how we were going to be able to provide the monies we would need to do the work we had to do. Understand when I say that when we went to Estimates, it meant that if I did not get these monies from one place, they had to come from some other place. We were faced with four options, in my opinion: We could have done nothing and left it as it was, and within four or five years the environment and the marine space would have been gone as we know it. Doing nothing was not an option. We could have borrowed the money, but the Prime Minister gave me a directive, as I told you, Sir, "No matter what you do, you cannot increase the future burden on Barbados and on Barbadians." We could also have determined that we had to create our own model; to go and find something that was brand new which nobody else had and try to figure it out. That was what we did, Sir, or we could have stuck with the model that was not going to work.

Sir, we have created a brand-new model. This is not the experience of Seychelles, and they got a lot of forward when they did their debt swap for a much smaller amount than we did. What the debt swap did for Seychelles was allow other people to invest into Seychelles. I am confident that this will allow other people to invest also into

Barbados. It is different from what Belize did, Sir. We had modelled our principle on that idea, Sir, but you know that Barbados is always different. Beautiful, beautiful Barbados, gem of the Caribbean Sea, with the Atlantic Ocean properly placed! Sir, we must recognise that for most of us, we did not go into this thing thinking that we would have had to create a new model. We had to do so. We found ourselves in a position where we were going to re-allocate resources. What does that mean in real terms? A lot of people probably would not understand what we are doing. We are not taking on additional debt. We are not borrowing money to do this. We have actually lowered the burden on the country in a way because the money that would have been paid out in interest is now being used to pay for things in-country. What does that mean in real terms?

Sir, in real terms this means that the money which we would have probably been spending otherwise on the environment or on healthcare or in education or in the social sector -- agriculture, justice -- we would have had to put money there and it meant we would not have money in the blue economy, or we would have had to put the money into the blue economy and lose money on those mentioned things. When we are able to source and locate funds outside of the country in a way that does not cost us anything, if there is any lesson to be learnt from this swap it is that this money will not cost us anything additional to the debt which we already have. This money is not going to cost us. People will talk about the debt swap and what the country is doing, Sir. We are not paying out an additional cent on this thing, Sir, and we are actually using the money to do good work in Barbados. This model is innovative.

In a nutshell, we will get benefits now and into the future and we will reduce the cost in a way now and into the future. Sir, because I know we have the Members of the Youth Parliament here with us, they can feel proud that their Government did not engage in a deal that would have placed a future burden on them either as citizens or as policymakers when many of them, I am sure, make it back into this space. They should feel proud that we did that even in the face of COVID. I also want to remind Members that during COVID when no other country was taking ships, Barbados was taking ships, allowing people to come here and get off and be safe, Sir. You may not know, Sir, that even in our conversation it was the way that we proceeded with moral authority that actually drove some of these deals. People were talking about what Barbados was doing even as we were having these conversations, because they too were proud of the work which Barbados did to keep people safe during COVID.

Sir, this debt swap represents a transformation. The savings on interest will allow us to do things that we could not otherwise do. I want to thank The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Sir, and I want to thank the Inter-American

Development Bank (IDB), because both TNC and the IDB came forward at a time when the country needed help, and they listened to us. When we found ourselves without a clear path and with no signpost to guide us, they listened, and they reshaped their approach to doing debt swaps so that Barbados could benefit. I want to thank them, Sir. I also want to thank White Oak, to be truthful, because when we were going through a lot of this financial arrangement, I had the benefit of being able to pick up the phone, send an email or WhatsApp message to the people at White Oak, Sir, and they did this without placing any additional cost on the country. Sir, people talk, but the money that we save here alone to be able to finance this operation is more than the money we have been paying out even to them. Sir, I want to thank them, because a lot of this deal was done in conversation with them. I want to thank the Inter-American Development Bank and The Nature Conservancy. We also have to thank the Credit Suisse and the First Caribbean International Bank, even though they do not take on the burden of the risk, because they are really taking the risk on Credit Suisse and The Nature Conservancy. However, it is putting faith back into our marine space.

Sir, what other part was in this process, because this deal is twofold. The deal is about financial transactions and also about our environmental commitments. Sir, the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund, I will always joke and say that it was to be called the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Trust (BEST), but the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central stole the name and now we are the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund. The fact is that it is still the same. Sir, we are doing a set up where the fund is not only the Government and the Honourable Minister started to explain this and I am sure the Honourable Minister responsible for the environment will as well. The Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund is already set up and we started that work early on this year.

Sir, some of the money from the first set of savings will go as an endowment to the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund. That fund will have as its core members The Nature Conservancy, the University of the West Indies and Government. I am sure the Minister of Environment will speak to all of the members on the thing. People can make applications to the fund, so it is not only Government that is going to benefit, this will redound to ordinary people. You can come and make an application to the fund to be able to do something in the marine space, so many of the local non-governmental organisations who have projects that they want finance can be able to do that, and I know of a few.

Why is this fund important? Sir, when I was in the Ministry, I remember that there was a study done by Coastal Zone Management and that study revealed two things. One, it revealed the tourists were willing to pay

money toward environmental sustainability, so they would not mind putting in an extra \$1 or \$2 towards the future of the country. They did not mind as long as it was directly going to the country and primarily to the marine space. However, the condition to that, was that it could not be going directly to the Government and into the Consolidated Fund. Hence, they were willing to put in money, as is the case of many people on the international stage, but that money cannot go to the Consolidated Fund, they would rather it goes to a set up that is managed, transparent and outside the sole control of the Government, but that it has built into it the tenets that will protect the money that they put into it. Sir, the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund ticks both of those boxes. I am convinced that beyond the money that we get from the debt swap, Barbados will be able to finance the operations of the marine space from investment from other people, private and otherwise because we have set up this fund. I was remarking to the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, that for the social services sector we need to set up such a fund, because people are willing to give to assist other people, but they are concerned when it goes directly to the Consolidated Fund.

Sir, I obviously feel very proud with the work we did with both the Inter-American Development Bank and The Nature Conservancy.

Sir, the other thing about this is that when we were discussing the original debt swap, it was only on the external debt. They had no interest in our internal debt. When we were doing the debt swap, we would have to put it out there, we would have a middleman in the way of The Nature Conservancy, we would put the bonds out there for sale and none of it would be the debt that was primarily owed to the National Insurance Scheme. However, in this iteration of the swap, we get to cover some of our external debt and some of our internal debt, we get to put money back into the National Insurance Scheme fairly immediately. This was not the deal in the original iteration of this manifestation of the debt swap.

Sir, sometimes there is opportunity in tragedy, and we found the opportunity in the tragedy, and we now present to the people of Barbados a deal that will cost them nothing more, that has the guarantee of both the Inter-American Development Bank and the Nature Conservancy with their double A and triple A ratings that allows us to work through First Caribbean International Bank and the Credit Suisse to be able to do it, and everybody feeling fairly protected and all that is left for us to do, is to deliver to the people of Barbados. I have the greatest confidence when I look at the work that we have already done that we will be able to deliver to the people of Barbados.

Sir, if you think about what happened in Belize, The Nature Conservancy had to put in some equity. When you

think of what happened in Seychelles, The Nature Conservancy basically put in all of the upfront capital. In this case, they neither have to put in equity or capital, but just guarantee the debt. Sir, if you think in terms of the cost associated with them going out there and managing it, we take all of that out, that is additional money going back into the ocean space. I had said before it is extremely difficult and costly to do work in that ocean space. I am happy that we will be able to have these additional savings.

I have the greatest confidence that we designed a programme, and we will manage a program on the local stage. I remember the former Prime Minister used to say that a country must have confidence in itself, the former member for St. Peter, I can hear him now. Sir, through our program, even though we dealt with the International Monetary Fund, the BERT Program is a homegrown program. This program for the debt swap is also a homegrown program. This is the expression of confidence in your own self Sir, and I am happy to be associated with it.

What are some of the promises that we made? People will say this deal is too good to be true. What is expected of Barbados as a result of this? What are our commitments? This very important, Sir, the things that we committed to as a part of this debt swap are things that we had committed to period. We did not take on any additional commitments because of anybody. We were not passive recipients of the dictates of the international community in this process. Sir, the things that we committed to were things that we had committed anyhow. I am sure the Honourable Minister of the Environment will go through in more detail, but we wanted to make sure that we do a marine spatial plan. I have been talking about this marine spatial plan for three and a half years. I had hope that I would be able to say that in the Ministry of Blue Economy we delivered on the spatial plan, but I know that the Minister responsible for the environment will deliver on this marine spatial plan. The marine spatial plan is very important because imagine if you were on the land, how would you go about planning anything on the land if you do not have a plan. The Honourable Minister responsible for housing and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West will tell you that if you want to do a housing development you have to have a plan, you have to know which land is good for housing, which land is likely to slip, which areas are designated as water zones and so on and so forth. We have 424 times the ocean's space; in the ocean we have no plan. We have plans for the ocean but have no ocean plan. Therefore, we needed to have a marine spatial plan that set out what activity should occur where, what potentially could occur and so on and so forth. To have a Ministry responsible for blue economy as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central now has, he would need to know where things go, where are we going to look at our energy plan, where are we going to be drilling for

oil? Where are we going to be putting down the Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADS)? Which areas are going to be the shipping lanes? Where are we going to allow the jet ski operators to come in? Where are we going to allow the other local vessels that comply with the domestic shipping regulations to ply their trade? It is all of these things. Where do we want to grow sea moss, as we have now started doing? This Government has started doing sea moss farming. We are doing so many things that we do not get to talk about all of them. Sir, without a plan, you would fumble over yourself. If you do not know where you are going, they say any road will take you there. If it is that that is the history of the former Government, then that is not the way we are going to do it.

First, we set out a marine spatial plan. This marine spatial plan would have the benefit of TNC. We did not have it before. It will be guided by the Coastal Zone Management Unit (CMZU). Sir, it is difficult for me to speak about the work that we did in the Blue Economy Department, maritime or the marine space and not give proper credit to the CMZU. We have in Barbados one of the most professional institutions when it comes to handling affairs on the ocean and marine. When we were meeting with some of the consultants when looking at the island, we were told that Barbados has the most information that they have seen about anything to do with the ocean of any country at all in the region and comparable to bigger countries, Sir, through the CMZU.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Mr. Speaker, the other things that we committed to, I would let the Minister speak to those in terms of the legislation and the work that we want to do. Lastly, this is about people, and I feel concerned that lately we have put politics into everything. Politics is into everything. We tried to talk about work in the social sector, there are complaints. The work that my colleagues are doing in labour, they are complaining. The work in agriculture is experiencing the same thing. It is as though there can be no good in this country. If a man just keeps telling you bad things repeatedly, it has been my experience that the best thing for you to do is to part with that man.

If that is all coming from the other side, Sir, then the best thing for the people to do is to part with them when they do that. The truth is, Sir, if we do not change the conversation, then we will not change the consequences. If we do not uplift the narrative, then we will not uplift this nation. The Other Side seems hell bent on sticking to an old narrative that will do no justice to the country, Sir. They stood up for nothing and now they are standing in the way of everything, Sir. The people of this country must come to understand that we have done more in the last four-and-a-half years than most Governments did in an entire term.

It was absolutely more than what was done in the ten years and in circumstances that are much more difficult than in the last ten years. You know that they say that where there is no vision, the people perish. Barbadians almost perished at the hands of a 10-year relationship with the former Government that brought us nothing. Sir, we are now seeking to deliver to the people of this country and all that I am hearing is incomplete analysis. Really and truly, what should be having conversation for children, it is now assuming the place of mature conversation. Every time I look at what it is that we are doing, I feel proud of the work that the Government is doing.

You talk to fishermen about what they got in those ten years, and they would tell you a bad deal. You talk to the fish vendors, and they would tell you the same thing, a bad deal. The jet ski operators, shipping people who ply locally and everybody would tell you that they felt they got a bad deal. Fishermen now have FADS to catch fish. We are now managing the sargassum seaweed and it is not easy. This has been a very difficult year for that seaweed. Sir, all around we are doing well. As I close, this is two-fold. There is the financing arrangement which was done brilliantly by the Ministers in the Ministry responsible for finance; brilliantly, Sir. There is the second part, which is the environmental component, Sir, which commits us to do the things that we wanted to anyway and which I am sure that the Minister responsible for environment will deliver brilliantly as well.

The people of Barbados can rest assured that we gave them not the best deal possible out there but that we created for them the best deal that could be found anywhere on this earth, Sir, to ensure that Barbadians, members of the Youth Parliament and ordinary people could live in this country in the now and into the future. I thank you and I want to support these two Resolutions with as much support that I possibly can.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable member for Christ Church West Central

Hon. A. R. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to simply say that I ditto everything that was said by my two colleagues who spoke lucidly before me. I really want to start but I could really ditto everything and take my seat because they were so sedulous in their presentation. However, I want to start off by where my colleague finished his speech just now and say to him that I agree. It is the new deal. It is the real deal. There was a calypsonian who said this year that "Mia" love deals but it is the "Bajan" deal. It is the deal that would seek to transform the landscape of Barbados. I want to say also because we just came out of the Crop Over season, this is who we are. It is

another song by a calypsonian; This is who we are. It is not only as a Government but as a people. This is who we are.

Since we will speak about biodiversity later because I am still in the Crop Over season, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we are doing it like a bee. I really want to say so. The reason why I say so is that over the last four or more years, we have sought to pollenate this country in a metaphorical way. When it comes to renewable energy, look at the transformation and growth over the last four years or more thanks to the Minister responsible for the energy sector. Look at what is happening in the transport sector which is another way of pollinating. Look at what is happening in education, Mr. Speaker, and how we are able to give young people the opportunity to have tertiary level education. I have to get to the ocean, Mr. Speaker. I am not only speaking about biodiversity but the ability for us literally and figuratively to pollenate the reefs and ensure that our corals become part of the sustainable development of this country.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have done in short order that which only could be imagined by some in this country. As the Minister who is the Member of Parliament for St. Michael South alluded to earlier, it has really poured cold water on all the gloom and doom being preached in practice by those who are responsible for abnormal atmospheric noises across this country. I want to say to Barbadians today that this new deal which is a "Bajan" deal will not cost them a cent. It will not cost their children a cent. It will not cost their children's children a cent. The only thing we have applied with hard work and sweat expenditure over the last three-plus years when we started this deal is common sense.

We were exposed to capital sense in the lost decade, but this is common sense; basic common sense that we have applied. The entire common sense about it is because the Member of Parliament for Christ Church East Central spoke about the economics. I am not an economist. The common sense about this is that by allowing us to use the interest being saved on a deal for Barbadians, we are going to build out, not only a marine spatial plan, but an eco-systems management across this country that will seek to ensure that the existential threats that we are faced with as a nation are minimised and at best, that we are able to neuter them. I want to ask: What are we talking about when we talk about a marine spatial plan and what is important as we seek to build it out? First, before we get to the marine spatial plan, what does it involve? The types of conversation the Member of Parliament, I want to say, without apologies, my heartfelt thanks to not only the Minister now with responsibility for the finance and economic affairs of this country, the Minister who sits in the Prime Minister's Office, but the Minister responsible who represents with agora the good constituents of St. Michael South, the person who sat in the Chair of the Blue

Economy and who people refer to as the Blue Boy in Barbados, none other than my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, who has done an amazing job at putting this country on the map as it relates to the blue economy. Do not get tied up with the colours. I am the Minister responsible for both the green and the blue environment, they call me the Minister for the turquoise ministry, but green comes before blue on the colour spectrum so I have to make no apologies about that. What I am saying though, Mr. Speaker, is that the type of research that was put into this project over the three and a half years or so is one that I need to speak about. We were able to gather and bring together and interfused the geologists and marine biologists. We did research for the oceanographers; we got the boat operators. The Minister who was responsible for the Ministry before spoke about it, jet ski operators, the ordinary fisherfolk were able to make inputs as to how we are going to demarcate our ocean for the sustainable benefits of all Barbadians. That is most important, and we said that we would have conversations with the scientists, the seismometer, and biodiverse specialists. That is the type of conversation we had before and these meeting were held over a three-and-a-half-year period or so along with members of the Coastal Zone Management Unit and I want to echo the praise that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South who spoke before me sang as it relates to the Coastal Zone Management Unit and I want to pay homage to that Unit which is ably led by Dr. Leo Brewster and the entire team for the amazing work they have been doing over the last decade or so in this country. To the extent that people are now seeking their advice across the Caribbean as it relates to marine management and the science involved in marine management.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a marine spatial plan, what are we saying in simple terms? We sat about to basically look at five milestones. The first milestone looked at the engagement and how we are going to start the process over the next three to five years because I want to say this before I get into the details or what some may call the inaudible. I want to be able to say that when you reflect on our Manifesto plan what you are seeing being espoused today is a part of the Manifesto plans, we made to Barbadians and as we said before, a promise made is a promise kept. I want to say that the ability for us to develop our exclusive economic zone is a part of our Manifesto commitment and to say today that what this Debt For Nature Swap will be doing over the next three to five years is to allow us to demarcate in a special way where we would allow the social economic and sustainable development of our people and of our marine life. Most importantly, that is a part of our Manifesto pledge.

What is the Marine Spatial Plan that we are talking about, M.S.P., if you want to use the abbreviation? The Marine Spatial Plan seeks to divide our Exclusive

Economic Zone (E.E.Z.) into areas based on their true potential and what we said between milestone 1-5, the first thing we are going to do is to ensure that our biodiversity is preserved. Our high potential biodiversity and our medium potential biodiversity. What do we mean by that? We have made a commitment and we have acquiesced to the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly's call to be able to augment 30 per cent of our biodiversity by the year 2030. It is called "The 30-30 Vision and Goal". We said, as a country, Small Island Developing States (S.I.D.S.), that we would achieve this goal once we put all of collective sin to bear and that is why we said, as a part of the Marine Spatial Plan looking at the milestone 1 -- 5 that we are going to develop and enhance 30 per cent of our biodiversity by the year 2030. When we are looking at areas that we would ensure biodiversity we are looking at the way living organisms exist in a particular ecosystem or environment. Simply put. What we have said over the years is that our loss of biodiversity is impacting our ability to fight the vagaries of climate change and natural disasters. Our loss of fish stock, which is the marine flora and fauna, has impacted the ability for our reefs to survive and those who are responsible for my unit would tell me that under the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species our sea turtle which is responsible for replenishing our reefs and providing a habitat for smaller fishes, because their numbers are depleting it is affect our reefs so we have lost about 50 something species of fish thus far in the marine environment, a serious loss of our biodiversity, not only the fauna, but the flora as well. There are certain phytoplankton and plants at the bottom of the ocean that we are seeing no more and what these things do, because we are talking about climate change and how biodiversity and the ability for us to enhance our biodiversity is able to militate and mitigate against the vagaries of climate change, that is the conversation we are having today with Barbadians.

What I want to say is that when we lose our reefs and our coral, we are losing the ability of our marine plants to be able to abstract from the environment that harmful carbon dioxide which is the leading greenhouse gas. It is called the Blue Carbon Sink and mind you, although Barbados only produces about two million tonnes or so, small in the scheme of things when you look at the world that produces about 40 or 50 billion tonnes yearly, it is still enough to cause a threat on the unborn child and on the future generation, those in the gallery that are looking over and hearing the conversation because I know they are paying rapt attention. They are the future, and their children will be affected if we do not preserve our biological diversity whether in the hydrosphere on the sea or the lithosphere on land. That is the stark reality that we are faced with.

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is we are saying, as a Government, that this marine spatial plan will first look at

our ability to rehabilitate that biodiversity. Find out what is there, preserve it and allow it to take its natural function and role in the fight against climate change. That is what we are saying. Therefore, that is the first part of the Marine Spatial Plan. Milestone 125 and I want to say that when we are talking about carbon sequestration, they are talking about the land space as well but interesting enough as Minister who spoke before me eluded to the sea space is about 400 plus times the size of our land space so if we are able to increase our bio diversity under the ocean you could understand the tremendous benefit it is as it relates to our fight. We could understand the increase in improvement of our blue carbon sink. Right now, the Blue Carbon Sink abstracts from the environment and sequesters about 20 to 25 per cent of our carbon dioxide. The green environment does the same thing and that is why I will speak about our ability to plant more trees and do the same thing on our land space because 20 to 25 percent one way for the green to the same thing happening in the Blue Economy as carbon sinks. That is only 15 per cent. You have another percentage going in the atmosphere. That is the reality of it so if we are able to improve because the reality right now as it stands, we are only able to sequester about 400,000 tons or so or maybe less of the carbon dioxide that we produce yearly by our fossil fuel burning because the Ministry of Energy will tell you that 1.6 million tons are produced alone by the Ministry of the or the Energy Sector. That is the reality of it. The rest is made up of the pesticides and what's not and the bio chemicals being produced by a meeting of our landfills and ruminants from the meeting from the stomach and what not. These are the realities that we are faced with, but I am saying the first component of the Marine Spatial Plan will speak to milestone one to five and that deals with biodiversity but it's not only biodiversity that we will be looking at over the next couple of years. We will also be looking at areas when we do our science and our research. Areas in the sea that can be used for wind energy. Areas that could be used for oil and gas and as the Minister of Energy, Member of Parliament for St. James Central would tell us that when this gas is found and we preserve it, it is for export purposes. It is for foreign exchange. That is the type of conversation you will be having. There are other areas in the sea that will be used for artisanal inaudible The Member for Parliament for St. Michael South spoke about the fact that he and using his Marine manage area and the plans he has done so far that they are what we call now the (FADS) Fish Aggregating Devices which are able to attract the fish and the smaller fish, and the fishermen can do their business by having that potential catch. This is what we have done so far so they will be areas demarcated with a proper Marine Spatial Plan. That is what we are going to bring to the people of this country. They will be areas demarcated for fishing for Jet Ski operation for shipping and the areas that we will have dedicated for the purposes of shipping docking et cetera. We will have an area that after the inaudible. Now the world is focused they have the

visual acuity some may call for rare metals and it is no secret that they are rare metals found at the bottom of the ocean especially the Caribbean Ocean. That is why it is important that we start to look and do the investigation and to have a Marine Spatial Plan that will be able to realise these things Polymetallic Nodules that is what they are called found at the bottom of the ocean with significant worth. That is the type of conversation we are having so a Marine Spatial Plan that would say this is the area rich with these Polymetallic Nodules that we can get foreign exchange for when we are able to fully explore it. These are the types of conversation we need to have. Areas, for instance where we will put aside to say these are the areas for diving, recreation or otherwise. Areas, of course, where we are going to say we are going to protect our species, our fish. We know that the parrot fish are able because of their ability in their digestive system to rehabilitate our beaches. One parrot fish can deliver 960 pounds per year of sand on the beach to help us with the beach erosion some may call it accretion. The Member for Parliament for Christ Church West would know that big word. Accretion, to build back the beach and the parrot fish does it. That is why they are an important part of our biodiversity and why we have to preserve these things so areas will be demarcated for the preservation of our species, our fish and then, of course, our reefs and our coral. These are the things that will be having a conversation to Barbadians about. These are important conversations to have now because as I said the only way, we will be able to mitigate and adapt to the vagaries of climate change is if we start looking, not only at man-made interventions but natural and land-based solutions as well when it relates to combating these vagaries and to be able to keep our temperatures. The forecast is not good. It is not. If we continue on this trajectory our sea levels will rise above, I think the last couple of years it rose to about four millimetres or so. By the year 2050 guarantee on this current trajectory with the melting of the ice in the cryosphere or the ice sphere we will a sea level that will rise about 15 inches or so in the next 50 years killing off most of our beaches, our reefs, our biodiversity and of course our sustainable livelihood for our fishermen.

The reality of it over the next 50 years if we continue on this trajectory. It is scientific knowledge and that is why I say an area must also be demarcated when we start to build out our Marine Spatial Plan for the reefs and coral restoration. Those areas. The reefs. The importance of the reefs not only for the life of species and fish and the ability for them to live in an atmosphere, an ecosystem but the reefs and the plants at the bottom of the ocean that live on these reefs. Scientists have now found that they produce something called sulphur dioxide surfactant. Something that goes on the top of the ocean and helps to cool down the ocean. Now, where are the hurricanes and tsunamis formed? On the ocean, the surface of the ocean propels by the heat, so you do not have to be a rocket scientist now to

understand the importance of the reefs in terms of cooling the ocean by releasing this surfactant. The importance of the reef so of the Marine Spatial Plan that takes this into consideration will have been able to restore because that is the next thing that we are going to be doing in the emergency of the environment. Green and Blue Economy where we will look at a serious the reef restoration programme because we understand the importance of it and then I could not, we are talking about a Marine Spatial Plan, talking about the hydrosphere as lucidly as I am without speaking equally about the perennial Grinch. The mega algae Sargassum Seaweed. It is a threat. It is a natural phenomenon. Some persons relate it to the fact that its perforation is directly related to our sea level rise and the increase heat in the Atlantic Ocean et cetera but one thing I want to say today because I believe that the increase proliferation also has to do with the anthropogenic behaviours of mankind, not only Barbadians and this where I put on my serious environmental police hat. It is not only Barbadians but people across the world. When I say anthropogenic behaviour, I mean things like illegal dumping in the sea. The overloading of nutrients in the sea provides a rich oasis, a habitat for the proliferation, growth, and development of Sargassum seaweed. That is the bottom line, Bajan talk. It is what is responsible along with the sea-level rise and the increase in heat and so on for this growth of this perennial Grinch that seeks not only to interfere and obstruct the sustainable livelihoods of our fishermen, but our touristic product as well. It is all over the Caribbean; Belize, Jamaica, you name it, they complain bitterly, so it is not a fight that is unique to us in Barbados. It is not an anomaly that is singularly focused on Barbados as a country. It is across the Caribbean.

I know that the Member of Parliament for St. Philip South, my good friend, will work with those in the agricultural industry to ensure that we reduce our pesticides. That is why I am going to talk about the land-based solutions to combat the vagaries of climate change. We must reduce our pesticides using phyto-pharmaceuticals, natural products instead of these harmful pesticides and additional persistent organic pollutants and so on that will find their way to the sea, causing all of the problems. There are also fertilisers that find their way into the sea and illegal dumping, because when you dump into the gullies and there is heavy rainfall, the waste ends up in the ocean. It is causing the overloading of nutrients in the ocean, and there is a reason why I say so. I am not saying so because I have a lexical exercise with that thing that operates in the atmospheric realm. I am saying so because it is based on scientific evidence.

We were able, thanks to the Government of New Zealand and my Minister colleague who sat in the blue economy seat before me, to have a conversation with those persons in New Zealand. We had a conversation with the experts to do some tests on the Sargassum seaweed, and

they acquiesced and started testing. They tested in the Eastern Caribbean, and of course Barbados was chosen. We did some tests in the western part of the Caribbean and in Belize. Then we did some tests in the central Caribbean including Jamaica so that we could find out what were the constituents in this Sargassum seaweed. That was what we did in order to find out what were the active components in the Sargassum seaweed. This was what the tests revealed, and I am not surprised because I said the seaweed which we see is the biggest sequestering organism in the marine space. What do I mean by that? Seaweed is able to absorb more carbon dioxide than most marine plants, so this Grinch that we are talking about, these mega-algae that everybody is complaining about, is taking up those harmful things that exist in the ocean. Why do these things exist in the ocean? Because mankind continues to pollute the ocean. It is as simple as that.

The seaweed is probably saving us, and that is the reality of it, because just as the body reacts in a homeostatic way, so too does the ocean. If you overload the ocean with chemicals, lo and behold, the one thing that is produced by the ocean that is a nuisance has the ability to sequester these chemicals from the same sea and the marine environment. Mind you, while the same seaweed has about ten times the potential to sequester or remove carbon dioxide than normal marine flora from phytoplankton that lives at the bottom of the ocean, Sargassum has the ability to abstract carbon dioxide as well. We talk about ocean acidity that is a threat. When you abstract carbon dioxide you are bringing an alkaline environment to the ocean, so what I am saying is that although it is seen as a proverbial enemy of the sea, there is some potential in it, and it is saving us. What the New Zealand Government brought back from their tests showed that the Sargassum seaweed has high levels of arsenic, a cadmium higher than international levels.

What I told Barbadians afterwards was to stop putting it on their plants and using it for their agricultural purposes because the test results were back and confirmed that these chemical levels were higher than normal. We, the Ministry, utilising our physical workforce -- obviously not mechanical equipment because of the need to preserve the beaches -- have men employed on a daily basis to remove it and decompose in a safe area which is non-porous so that it will not get into our water supply and our plant life and so on. When it gets into the plants, fruits, and vegetables, it comes into our palates and into our digestive system. That is the reality of it all. What does that tell us, though? It tells us that the sea is being polluted by the same thing, and all the Sargassum is doing is removing it, so the clarion call for me today as Minister is to tell all Barbadians to be careful how they pollute because it may come back to haunt them.

When you are taking your garbage and throwing it in the gully, thankfully we have a ban on plastic ably led by the Minister who sat in this seat before me. The Member of Parliament for St. Michael South is my good friend, and I am not calling him “Hurricane Kirk” because he stopped speaking about bad weather, or Tropical Storm Kirk. I am talking about the Member of Parliament for St. Michael South who was able singlehandedly to lead the ban on single-use, petro-based plastics, recognised by UNEA (United Nations Environment Assembly) when we went to Nairobi as one of the single greatest achievements by a Small Island Developing State in leading the charge against petro-based plastics. That is something I think we should be proud of. Countries all over the world cannot get that done, and we were recognised as a country, a Small Island Developing State led by the Member of Parliament for St. Michael Northeast.

There is a saying that when you want something said, you can call on a man and when you want something done, you call on a lady. Barbadians made the call, and we are doing what we are supposed to do. I see some of the ladies in here smiling. What I am saying is that it showed that if we continue with this behaviour of polluting the sea -- thankfully we do not have the plastic that can cause the dioxins to come into our digestive system. When the plastics' micro particles are digested by the fish, where do the fish end up? On the tables of ordinary Barbadians. We love fish. We eat fish. It is part of the sustainable livelihood of the fishermen. I am therefore saying we have to put the brakes now on illegal dumping. It is as simple as that. We have to put the brakes on illegal dumping. I just showed the correlation between what happens on the land and how it gets into the seas, and the results thereof.

The ocean is crying out for help. We are crying out for fresh water. We are crying out for the rehabilitation of the sea. That is the reality of it, so a marine spatial plan will seek to demarcate those areas and ensure the sustainable existence of those areas so that it can benefit us in a social way, an economical way and a way that is able to preserve the environment.

However, I want to go on further to my last area. We also said that there will be a Barbados Environmental Sustainable Fund. These are the things that are happening. This is what I call the new deal and the bayan deal. I do not have a problem if they associated us with these, the real deal. The new deal and the real deal for Barbadians is that for the first time, never happened before, things that only some persons would imagine, if they have the creative imagination of some of our young persons. Since June 22nd of this year, we are now in the process of rolling out that which was finalised on June 22nd of this year, a Barbados Environmental Sustainable Fund. What does do and what does it consist of? I heard the Member of Parliament who spoke before me talk about the constituents

of the fund, what it is made up of, and who are the active players involved. Just briefly, we have three founder members, the Government of Barbados of course, The Nature Conservancy and the University of the West Indies which is the research institute. Those are the founding members of the fund. The ordinary directors are the Ministry of Environment which is my Ministry, the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, we have non-governmental organisations, The Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisation (BARNUFO), the union that represents the fisherfolk, the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, and the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN), this is the group I addressed yesterday. This is how this trust fund or this environmental sustainable fund will be constituted. What does it do? It allows the Government, without costing the taxpayers a cent in this country, the ability to be able to get the funds. I want to say that benefactors will be coming in their numbers when they see what we are doing to preserve the environment. They will be titillated by the fact that for the first time, something that has never been done before, in terms of marine spatial plan they built out. They will see the work of the Government and say to themselves, I want to be part of having land based solutions to combat the rigors of climate change, I want to be part of having environmental solutions, I want for us as a country to be able to preserve our wetlands and our biodiversity, special protective areas of wetlands, I want to be able to say that as a Ramsar Site we are going to contribute to the ecological development of Graeme Hall Swamp and I am going to put ‘x’ amount of money. That is what the fund is going to be used for. According to the Member that spoke before me, the fund is not going into the Consolidated Fund. It is not something that the Government can touch. It is there where the environmental board with the founding members, who will decide the sustainable environmental projects that we will flesh out with the money.

Just now, I spoke about our special protective areas and our wetlands. We have one site that is recognised by Ramsar and that is the Graeme Hall site as an ecosystem with wetlands and it has a mixture of all of the active principles, like biodiversity and so forth. However, we are now trying, and we are on the threshold to have Long Pond as the next recognised site for Ramsar. There is one in Chancery Lane, which understands that the interfuses between our wetland or water deposit and a natural environment. I want all Barbadians to hear, that is why is say that it must be an unequivocal, unbridled, and unashamed trust to build out our biodiversity, because that we found in Long Pond over the last couple of months, is that there is an indigenous crab, never found in any place in the World, only in Long Pond, a crab endemic to Long Pond. I do not have to sit down. I will get vocal in here talking about the use in terms of our biodiversity and the importance of our ecosystem as it relates to crabs. The

Member of Parliament beside me from St. Philip told me to put in some shrimp, he probably gets that a lot in St. Philip and other decapods. We can go on and on. I said, if I start to talk about these things my throat will start to hurt me, you call it vocal fry.

However, I want to say that along with building out those things, we are saying to Barbadians, this is another area that we can have person investing in, like the planting of one million trees. I must tell Barbadians that I am over 400 000 thus far, albeit the challenges that we had with COVID, like the lockdowns and other things, and the fact that we are one of the 15th drought prone countries in the World. I want to remind Barbadians that this month is the month of Arbor month, and we will be having a national tree planting competition again this year to plant more trees and to understand the importance. That is a conversation for another time. However, people who want to invest in these things can come and say, you are our country, you have started a drive, and we are going to put some funds into it so you can build out this.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member has five more minutes.

Hon. A. R. FORDE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Of course, our Botanical Garden, which is a natural oasis again. Then, our water conservation and how we treat to water conservation in a natural way. I already said this ship does not need to be flagged by me, but our Roofs to Reefs Project is the best sustainable developed project in the World. I say so and I am not holding back this red flag. It is the best and the most efficient sustainable development project in the World. It is able. If you look at it and you see the 17 sustainable development goals, we probably have reached about 15 in the Roofs to Reefs. What I am saying is that they empower women in the Roofs to Reefs Project because domesticated workers and thing will become part of this whole water reuse and how we treat to domestic workers, washing clothes and everything, they will be empowered in this whole exercise. To me it is able to realise about 15 or 17 of the sustainable development goals. However, not only that, but our project seeks to protect us from the soil erosion that we are faced with. The Minister responsible, which is my friend from St. Philip South, will tell you that he has started a hedgerow project all throughout the length and breadth of this country, especially in rural Barbados to stop the erosion along with the gabions in terms of root architecture, so that we will not have the erosion that we are having. It is alright to build these fancy roads and different things that is all fine and good with the Complant Project, but you must be able to stop the erosion, because if you build a road and still getting land slippage the road will slip away, whether it is new or old. That is the bottom line.

These are the things that we are talking about, the certification, the ability to combat soil erosion and the ability to reforest the country. If we are able to improve our green carbon sink then we are able to take more carbon dioxide, that harmful greenhouse gas out of the atmosphere. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that I can speak about in terms of how the Barbados Environmental Sustainable Trust will protect, or how persons can become involved in terms of putting funds, and as the Member that spoke before me said, putting money where their mouths are. Of course, there are a lot of projects, I talked about the Water Reuse Project and how we can increase our structure so that instead of the water running into the hydrosphere or the sea and causing problems, we would be able to ensure that there is the movement of water to the aquifers, proper damming, proper conservation, and biodiversity.

I will bring the Biodiversity Action Plan in the not-too-distant future because I believe that Barbados is already late in Parliament. I will come and elucidate as long as I could and if you give me permission, Sir, so that Barbadians would understand the importance of preserving our biodiversity. Mr. Speaker, when you look around this room, we operate in a biodiverse Parliament. You are not the same as the Member who sits immediately in front of you, to your left or right. All of us have our different characteristics, each animal and plant. However, they operate with those different characteristics for the benefit of the environment. It is the movement and ability to live, feel, drink, eat, sleep and how they shed their bodies which make up the ecological space.

All we are saying as a Government is that we will do everything in our power to ensure the sustainability not only of the environment but as the Member who spoke before me so limpidly and translucently like the water you are getting now in St. Peter unlike the water being provided under the lost decade, it redounds to the sustainable development of livelihoods most importantly. I would now go and repeat a maxim that is coined by my good friend that "People matter over politics." Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that there is an irreversible, unequivocal, unbridled sometimes and gummous between us and the sea. If you look at the relationship, you just have to understand it. We speak often about the blood, sweat and tears.

The Minister spoke about the blood, sweat and tears that he went through to get this Bill passed. The Member of Parliament for Christ Church East Central said the same thing; blood, sweat and tears. However, do you know what is the constant with the blood, sweat and tears? Salt. Blood has in salt. Sweat has salt. Tears have salt. I want to say that the sea is full of salt. There is an irreversible gummous in association with the sea whether we like it or not because all of them operate in a salty environment. Mr. speaker, with those few words, I want to thank you. I want

to commend the Minister and give my full, unreserved support to these pieces of Resolutions.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Ms. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that further consideration of this Bill be postponed.

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

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

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

(RECOMMITTED)

Hon. Ms. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to approve in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act Cap. 225 the vesting in the Barbados Tourism Invest Inc. (BTII) of a parcel of land the property of the State together with the building thereon known as the Treasury Building situate at Bridge Street in the parish of Saint Michael in this Island for the purpose of residential development.

I also beg to give notice of a Resolution to extend the Public Health Emergency.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Ms. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.20 p.m. today.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.20 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown.

Mr. C. A. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, it is my pleasure to join this debate at this time to lend my support to this Debt Conversion Project, the Debt For

Nature Swap. Some may ask the question: What does the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown have to contribute to this maritime affair? Some may ask the question: What does he have to contribute to this financial affair? But what I rise to speak about today, on a serious note, is really to emphasise, underline and underscore the three great presentations that went before myself and also to really underscore the people part of it and basically to ask Barbadians to get involved. A lot of the times when we bring these types of legislations and projects the average Barbadian believe that these are projects of the Government, these are projects for the scientists, these are project for the financiers and not understand that there is possibility and potential to be projects of the people, the project of them, the project of I, but they can be involved in the marine space. They can be involved in the nature space. They can be involved in marine conservation through the Caribbean Youth Environment Network and today, Sir, as you would recognise that we do have the National Youth Parliament with us, and they are having a debate on 30th September in these very Chambers looking at education reform. How can you reform education in a way that people can see their role in society? Educate Barbadians in a way that they understand what debt is about and debt does not always have to be a bad word. Sir, I come to make a short presentation to speak to Barbadians, that is, the public, through you. I also want to tie my contribution today to productive partnerships because the reality is that we are in this together. The reality is that the Government cannot do it alone, hence, the need for productive, positive partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to do the one-family programme, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South and myself leading the charge, what Barbadians need to understand -- and the Honourable Member spoke about it last week -- that we may need upwards of \$150 million in value, but 75 per cent or more of that is required through partnerships. We have now got to turn the corner and move the needle towards understand that this Barbados belongs to all of us, and it will take all of us to get to the mountaintop. We cannot lean or depend on one, we cannot lean or depend on 30, we need to lean and depend on 287 000 plus people of this Republic called Barbados, Sir. It is a reality. It is a fact. Talking about banding hands, Sir, one of the partnerships that I am excited about is a partnership with the Embassy of the United States of America. With your permission, I am grateful to welcome Consular Chief, Mr. Kevin Ogle, he is now the new First Secretary Political and Economic Officer for Barbados focussing on affairs of Barbados and those are the type of partnerships that we need as we seek not only policy and technical assistance but financial assistance for Barbados and the region and also his colleague, Mr. Joseph Tordella, who is here and have been giving great support to the people and Government of Barbados thus far. I really want to commend them. We went through just my constituency

looking again at partnerships not just for The City of Bridgetown, but Barbados as a whole, that is why they are there and I commend them for their efforts and I commend them for the work that they are about to do, Mr. Speaker, that must be done in Barbados.

Another unique thing about, Mr. Ogle, I mentioned this in talking about batting your hand, he was actually friends with Mr. Malcolm Nash, and if any of you know Mr. Malcolm Nash you would know that there are no six sixes by Mr. Garfield Sobers, now Right Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers, without Mr. Malcolm Nash, that is his friend who Mr. Garfield Sobers hit for six sixes, but I understand he got over it so we are in good stead, so the partnership can continue, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight this idea of borrowing and the commentary that I have been hearing about borrowing in Barbados has been very, very troubling for me as a young person and a young parliamentarian. I think that when people hear about debt and borrowing, they automatically assume that it is a maximum negative, no good could come from borrowing, but there could be nothing further from the truth. That is why I underscored earlier, Sir, the whole idea of education reform. I went through primary, secondary, tertiary education twice and had no formal training whatsoever on doing something as simple as a budget, understanding things about assets versus liabilities and the fact that assets can take care of liabilities, but liabilities cannot give you any assets and that is a main and fundamental problem why we have so many vulnerable people in this society today. On top of things like education reform and the need that we are heading towards, this is led by the Honourable Minister of Education, Technology and Vocational Training to bring about empowerment in every aspect of the way leaving no student behind. Mr. Speaker, my aim here today is to be short, to be simple and to connect the dots between all the things mentioned above and that is what I plan to do.

There is a commentary here recently from one of the political parties, I cannot even remember its name, said by its leader. He said if the economy is so good why borrow. Should you only borrow in bad times for current expenditure? Is that what you are trying to tell me? If it is so good, why borrow? Why borrow is because that is the head time you can borrow at an affordable rate. Why borrow? That is the time when you borrow and you can expand the economy, expand the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.). Why borrow? These are now the perfect conditions to look at interest rates between 1 per cent to 4 per cent as opposed to his side was borrowing at 14 per cent. That is why borrow. I would hope, Sir, I am thinking now of future generations. Generations in the public gallery, generations of my daughter and my son, to be able to see these people come into this Honourable Chamber again and take us down into those dark and dreary roads

where they have no economic policy, no economic education, no economic plans and ideas, but I am glad that we have a team, and that I sit proudly with a team that can teach them chapter, line, verse, publisher and punctuation when it comes to economic matters in this country.

Mr. Speaker, why am I talking about debt and borrowing? Because I really want to focus on the transformational and innovative way that this Government, this Mia Amor Mottley lead Administration and this Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) Administration, is approaching all of the aspects of transformation in this nation. Again, I point to the young people upstairs, Sir, to understand that we, as Barbadians, from young need to understand about wealth. Wealth is not a bad word. We need to understand about debt. We need to understand budgeting. We need to understand, again, assets and liabilities. I am underscoring these things because in my daily life, in my daily canvass, in my daily conversations with my constituents, Sir, I feel badly every day to recognise that if we do not deal with these root causes, we are forever going to have to be dealing with lots of vulnerable people. If we cannot give them the tools necessary to climb out of that barrel of poverty once and for all and to break the backs of poverty in this country. Once and for all, they must be given these tools and when I listen to that debate and hopefully attend it at the end of this month, I would be a hard marker because I want to see if these important tenets are included in what we believe education reform should be about.

Sir, when I talk about transformation and innovation you would be aware that this Government was able to restructure the debt, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs was able to tell us about the \$17 billion, the 176 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). That means if you are making a dollar, you are spending \$1.76 cents for people that do not understand what 176 per cent of GDP means and if I am incorrect the Honourable Member will raise on a point of order and correct me, so it is no problem. Mr. Speaker, we were able during that time of the restructuring to still be able to respond to the vulnerable. I was part of a project and still technically part of it with the Household Mitigation Unit and the Adopt a Family Programme and I saw a lot of people being able to survive when the month come and to this day still able to all during the restructuring of the economy; was able to walk and chew gum. Some were able to improve systems. I do not know if we in here remember, and I will keep reminding us that there was a time in Barbados when you wanted a Police Certificate of Character. You had to get out of your bed while it was dark at 4 o'clock in the morning to get to a place for about 5 a.m. in a long line and find a line there and the possibility that somebody could come to you after the sun rise and say the last number in front of you. Go back and try again. While restructuring the economy, we now have a system where you can get up

anytime of the day, go online, apply, and get it back in 24 hours. Day or night. You can do it in your sleep all while restructuring the economy and while going through a number of aspects. That is why I talk about the transformation and innovation, and I want Barbadians and I want this Chamber to really do an honest contrast. In 2010 this government was part of the Chamber on that side when we got a lash. A lash where, the national lash where a leader passed away and we went into drift. We were like a boat on the ocean without an oar, without an engine, just drifting, but in 2018, 2019, 2020, we came in and we inherited a debt. We had an economic lash. Then we had a volcanic lash. We had a pandemic lash. We had a climatic lash. Lash after lash after lash and all during these lashes, lashes on top of lashes. Call it country abuse, too many lashes were able to restructure the debt, respond to the vulnerable and improve systems. We were also able, after the restructuring, to attract lower costs, low-cost debt to be able to look after the people even more and more importantly to role a wicket of a growth pitch; the sort of pitch that you would hit six sixes on. That is the sort of cricket that we are rolling now and that is really where the mission is at and what we are doing, and I want to talk about the creativity and the innovation of this team through you Sir to the public of Barbados because I think that sometimes we take it for granted. Sometimes you do so well that you actually put yourself at a disadvantage. I remember being on the HIV/AIDS Commission doing fantastic work to the part WHO say well you do not need any more help. You are doing well, carry on. However, if we do not remind the people about the creativity and the innovation that we brought to bear to be able to make their lives a little better even if it is not the best. I think it bares reminding because before and I do not know if people remember 1991. My mother was one of the conductresses that went home. My mother would work with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, work next to each other and she went home too. They went home together, probably on the same bus that they would conduct on. They went home and there was no cushion. There was nothing for the vulnerable. There was no Household Mitigation Unit. There was no creativity in responding to vulnerable. It was 'Wham bam, thank you Ma'am, go home and look for something else to do'. That is what it was about in the pass and even in near pass too because in 2016 it was about 3 500 that went home and again there was no Household Mitigation Unit. No 'RiRi'. No 'TiTi' no nothing. It was 'Wham bam thank you Ma'am go and find something to do'. While doing all of this this creative, innovative, and more importantly caring government put not only a cushion but a pillow to go with the cushion for the vulnerable and the people of Barbados - to be able to make sure that the norm was not continued. To decapitate poor people was the order of the day when we had to do restructuring because we would send home people from the bottom. All the time but what did this government do? What did this Prime Minister do? What did the finance

team of this government do? They said we were not decapitating people we were giving them a haircut. We will just take a little bit of the high top. Hence, we went and did some creative work making sure that the banks and the bonds that could withstand the blow than the people of Barbados, so everybody took a little bit, and everybody had some as opposed to decapitating poor people in this country.

Again, this debt swap speaks to that type of creativity because you know what is the big joke that we talk about debt and borrowing? There is no debt or borrowing here. That is the funny thing about it. The innovation of this is that we are looking to get a minimum of 30 million US dollars for anybody that know quick Maths that is 60 million Barbados dollars out of an initiative like this and I do not need to go over that. My colleagues that went before did it quite well, but I think that when you look at it, it is a big joke. When you are talking about borrowing and linking it to this. You would put Trevor Eastmond and Mac Fingall out of business with this sort of business because at the end of the day people need to understand creativity. This creativity is no one off. This government has taken the sun which has been around longer than the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. The sun that has been for the beginning of time and able to produce the value of land for people to live at a reasonable cost. The sun. Now we are taking our marine space, the sea and putting that value to work through marine conservation. We are going to take goodwill to ensure that we can take care of these thousand families, almost eight thousand people. We are taking the environment through the five seas and the climate fund and other initiatives to ensure that once and for all we can inaudible a lot of poor people in this country in the Belle, in Bellevue and in Chapman Lane finally. Over 750 homes in Chapman Lane alone, something that they have been waiting for four decades, before I was born Sir and that is now around the corner. St George is able to benefit from that. St. Michael. Lots of residents so we are using the earth. We are using wind, the sun, the sea. The Honourable Prime Minister would have to be Captain Planet. Let your powers combine. She has been innovative in leading the charge to ensure that we can bring to the people of Barbados a sense and a standard of living beyond what we have known as we seek to improve. That is our job in this Chamber, to be able to be innovative in one of the worst times in mankind history and I am satisfied and more than satisfied I am proud to be part of a team who is able to manage a process like this done by the former Minister of Maritime Affairs carried on by the present Minister of Maritime Affairs led by the Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supported by this administration to make sure that we do what we said we came to do which is a better life for all and with that Sir, I conclude in saying that I support this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to conclude this debate thanking Honourable members for their outstanding support and exposition in the relation to how this will affect ordinary Barbadians. Permit me, Sir, in the presence of our colleagues here from the United States Embassy to reiterate and give the Government's appreciation for the work that was done, I believe, in the Holetown area in relation to alleviating some longstanding flood issues, which was supported by the USAID (United States Agency for International Development). Therefore, as part of how Barbados has been able to respond to the challenges faced in relation to the climate crisis, we hope that we can rely on more of that type of support very specifically, because as we create an environment to be able to slingshot ourselves out of the impact of the pandemic, it is going to be important that we work with all of the global community in order to address some issues that have been too longstanding in this country, Sir.

When we met in Washington, D.C. earlier this year with Ms. Samantha Power, the head of USAID, a commitment was given that we would find ways to strategically align our response in terms of what was being done in the region. As Barbados has led the path with respect to advocacy, particularly as it relates to Small Island Developing States, I say thanks to the USAID formally on the behalf of the Government of Barbados with respect to being able to alleviate those longstanding issues in Holetown.

Asides.

Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN: As a country and certainly through the work that was done with the national coastal Integrated Risk Management platform, which was supported by the Inter-American Development Bank, we now really have a good sense of data. I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael South indicated the reference where we do have quite a bit of data from a scientific perspective to be able to help do a lot within the context of the marine spatial planning. I think within that encrypted platform which clearly identifies the associated risks for buildings in very specific places, then I believe we can craft solutions with intervention such as that; so that as we are focused here within the context of the marine conservation efforts, this really is a model to help us to be able to expand further and crowd in investment to respond to the climate challenges.

Mr. Speaker, these two Resolutions are going to be very important to transforming Barbados, and if you would permit me, Sir, just to clarify one thing for the avoidance of any doubt with respect to the Chamber. I would not ever

want to be accused of lying to Parliament, so let me just clarify one thing, Sir. The public debt at the end of June was actually \$13.68 billion or 129 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, in your speech you had said approximately, so you have not given specific estimates.

Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN: I am aware but there are people out there who will parse every single word, so I am just being very precise so that we understand that as we are hoping to buy back debt now and create space, we believe that innovative structures like these will help us to achieve the debt anchor which, as you know, Mr. Speaker, was pushed back from 2023 to 2035 because of the pandemic. We are now able to create space within even the existing debt service arrangements to do that which we could not have done before. Sir, I will also take this opportunity now just to reflect on a few things that I have observed and seen in my brief stay on this earth so far.

I remember, Sir, as a boy going over the Chamberlain Bridge there with my grandmother having me in tow. There has been an evolution in the development of that space, Sir, and you may recall that the former Honourable Member for The City, the Dame, engineered a series of solutions in a phased way which have really transformed the City space within the confines of the Careenage. As a boy, Sir, whenever I walked over the Bridge I was in fear of the Careenage because, to tell the truth, it did not look pretty, it was not inviting, and it did not smell good. It just was not fit, in a sense, for the things that we would all love to be able to do and enjoy within the marine space.

Those projects in those spaces were carried out similarly to what was done in relation to Holetown because, as you know, Sir, from the Globe all the way down and certainly in the area of the Marl Hole and so on would typically have flooded whenever there was heavy rain.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, 1976.

Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN: The year I was born, Sir. We have seen incremental change led by this Barbados Labour Party Government to address some of these very critical issues across the landscape of the country. Certainly, in my constituency in Wotton we have seen some development in that space. We have seen some development in the Chapman Lane area as well as Murphy's Pasture, where we have widened the canal space in order to enhance the environs for residents. As you know, Sir, if water is not moving it starts to settle, it creates issues with respect to mosquitoes and you get vector-borne diseases within the spaces. Therefore, you have to

appreciate that you need to have the free flow of water in order to improve the lives of all of our citizens.

Sir, I have seen in my lifetime a significant set of development which the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central in recent vintage dealt with in terms of the Constitution River project. Sir, I must tell you I have been in the Careenage a few times, as an adult now, and I had the good fortune a few weeks ago of kayaking actually up from Carlisle Bay all the way to the Globe Cinema, Sir. I did not realise that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central had created not just an oasis but really nothing short of a spectacular transformation within that space, which I know will help improve the lives of ordinary citizens there. There is a small marina, Sir. I call it a marina because there is a little enclave in there that if someone had a small boat, they could actually tie it off and moor it in a serious way. It really does give, for the residents within that space, a different view and perspective rather than just nasty water settling as it used to in the past.

Therefore, when we talk about transformation, Sir, these are the types of interventions I would anticipate that the Sustainability Fund conceptually would target; not just the marine space but, applying it across how Barbados would respond to the myriad challenges we face, we must be creative in working with our partners globally to be able to bring specific solutions to ordinary Barbadians. Sir, as I told you, during that last visit, I actually saw some mangroves in the Careenage. Mangroves, Sir, healthy, live mangroves in the Careenage; right in the bend by the hospital as you turn to go parallel to John Beckles Drive. Sir, these are the kinds of interventions that we are talking about that will not just help keep the water clean, as the mangroves tend to do, but we are actually creating an oasis either for leisure purposes or opportunities for persons to do business within that space. I hope that the whole of town -- those persons who live in town -- will use these spaces in order to be able to improve their livelihoods; obviously not seeing it as something the Government did but something that is available for the people of Barbados to benefit from, Sir.

Sir, I hope that we will be able to ride in the canal and go even further up to come up by you, because it would be wonderful thing for us to be able to get up to Bellevue.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have to get up Bridge Road first.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Agreed. Sir, through the canal there is space, and therefore, I am not sure what is precisely contemplated in relation to the sewage solution in that Bellevue area, but I believe that this will be an opportunity to be able not to just solve the problem with respect to sewage, but certainly develop flood mitigation

efforts to be able to ensure that we are able to do more within that space.

Therefore, these are the kinds of solutions that whilst we have had to directly borrow money to fund those types of activities in the past, then I believe that this type of transaction with the crowding in of additional resources will be able to help us to be able to do some of the very innovative interventions that not just improves the environment but I think the quality of life for ordinary Barbadians living close to these things.

It is important to underscore that whilst this will always be in progress, the development of the country is hinged and has always been tied to how we use debt. Sir, in the past, we have used debt to build our schools, we have used debt in the past to build our polyclinics, we have used debt in the past to build our hospitals, police stations, roads, fire stations, post offices, we have used debt to create the lifestyle to which we have become accustomed in Barbados.

What is critically important now, is that in this post pandemic World, that is even more challenging than when we went into the pandemic, Barbadians must now ensure that we all work together to solve those nagging problems that have confused the place for far too long, so that we can spend our very precious time focusing on actual problems, the big problems, in order to help the country get out of this situation much faster than the current trajectory. Whether we like it or not Sir, I do not know what is around the corner next year and would rather that we solve and deal with whether it is digitisation and the like. Whether in Government or the private sector that we just adopt, work through whatever issue we have to, but just make sure that we are making progress day by day in order to help reduce the cost of doing business, reduce time to do things and the example that the Honourable Member gave in relation to the Police Certificate of Character is spot on. This is because as I know that we have been working with all of the financial institutions to develop the real time payment system, I want that people can pay their taxes and Government receive the money at any time, and that Government can pay people directly in real time and the money goes into their accounts real time. Therefore, in order for us to be able to do that, it means that we must ensure that our systems are appropriately integrated, such that the efficiency can be lived and made real for ordinary citizens in this country.

Sir, I believe wholeheartedly in this transaction. I wish it was a little bigger to get a little more savings, because it means that we will be able to do more faster, but I still feel confident that once the transaction is executed the ability for the fund to be able to receive additional resources, to do very specific things, and let me reiterate that when I speak of the fund, it is not a Government fund,

monies will be redirected from the Consolidated Fund which is now legally required to pay debt, to be the Barbados Environmental and Sustainability Fund to be able to do very specific activities that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South as well as Christ Church West Central articulate in relation to the environmental milestones that are part of the commitments in relation to the debt for nature swap.

At the end of all of this, we still have to get up every day and make sure that the rest of the Government is running as it should be running. Therefore, the involvement with respect to young people within this blue economy space is going to be important. There are going to be many more opportunities available now for people to participate in leisure, conservation efforts, there will be opportunities commercially to be able to engage in that space. As this work is being conducted over the next 15 years, we want that as many Barbadians and those who may visit us from outside, but particularly more Barbadians to see that there is a way of life from engaging with the marine space. When I was a youngster, as most of us in this room perhaps may have been told, the sea has no backdoor. Sir, what that meant for most of us, is that when you go to the sea, you really do not go no further than where you can stand, and the water perhaps reaches your chin. Sir, we now need to completely disavow all of our young people of that mindset and be able to take the plunge, to be able to ensure that without fear they can respectfully engage with the sea, because as we know the sea can be rough, and therefore you have a healthy respect for water safety. However, at the end of the day that should not be a deterrent mentally with respect to being able to engage in lawful activity within the marine space. We want as many young people to be fully engaged within all of the full aspects of the development of the blue economy space.

Therefore, this transaction fits within our commitment to be able to open new avenues of opportunities for our young people, but all of our people and we will invite people from outside to come and help us develop the said opportunities. Therefore, I am asking Barbadians and all of our young people to do your research as appropriate. I am sure the Ministry of Environment will be able to provide the relevant information to keep the public up to date with respect to what is happening within the marine space, in order to help to build stronger stakeholder relations and to provide more opportunities for all of our people.

Sir, with those very few words, I am happy that we have been able to have this debate today. As I said, the transaction launched last Friday. Things are well on the way; bids are coming in and things are already reaching the target we would want.

Therefore, as I conclude in this debate, I am happy that we have been able to reach this point. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South reminded me of the herculean work that White Oak would have conducted on the people's behalf in order to be able to get us to this stage and I publicly thank them for that commitment. Hence, having done all of this, it is with immense pride and pleasure that I do now ask you that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you will remember that you started a cognate debate. Therefore, remember you are speaking to Order No.7 distinctly separate from Order No. 8, so you need to specify Order No. 7 on the order paper. Do you understand what I am saying?

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Yes, I understand. My apologies, I got a little excited, Sir. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move Order No. 7 do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 8 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A
RESOLUTION APPROVED IN ACCORDANCE SECTION 2
OF THE SPECIAL LOANS ACT CAP. 105 – THE
BORROWING BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
SUM

OF APPROXIMATELY (A) \$150 MILLION
FROM

FIRST CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL BANK
(BARBADOS) LIMITED

(B)\$150 MILLION FROM CREDIT SUISSE
INTERNATIONAL

TO BUY BACK A PRE-PAID EXISTING HIGHER
COSTS OF

GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS DEBT AND UTILISE
THE SAVINGS

TO FINANCE MARINE CONSERVATION IN
BARBADOS
ON THE

TERMS AND CONDITIONS CONTAINED IN AN
AGREEMENT

Hon R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 9 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH
SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND
DISPOSAL) ACT CAP 225 THE VESTING IN THE
BARBADOS TOURISM INVESTMENT INC. (BTII)
OF A PARCEL OF LAND THE PROPERTY OF
THE STATE TOGETHER WITH THE BUILDINGS
THEREON KNOWN AS THE TREASURY
BUILDING SITUATE AT BRIDGE STREET
IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL –
IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE
OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, as I rise to bring to notice and offer for the approval of this Honourable House a vesting of the Treasury Building situated just across the road from

this Chamber. As I listened to the other Members debate and heard many Members talk about when they were born and in what month, and before they were born. I looked at the Treasury Building which was opened on November 22, 1967. It is actually two days after I was born, so that would tell you by my grey hair how old the Treasury Building is, and I guess by extension how old I am also.

I am hearing asides that there is an antique. I do not know if the building is an antique or if I am. However, the Treasury Building has certainly been there for a long time and has been an icon for Barbados, and Bridgetown. I could go further and say that my great-uncle was one of the sub-contractors that built the Treasury Building. It continues to stand there. Engineering assessments have

been done of the Treasury Building and it continues to be a wonderfully well-built building that continues to stand the test of time although being next door to the river. For those of you

who know anything about constructing buildings in Bridgetown, you just need to go six to ten feet deep, including this building, Mr. Speaker, and you tend to hit water.

Only the other day, we had to take down the National Insurance Building because of water seepage underneath it and the foundation caused it to have a problem. The National Insurance Building was built in 1971 which is even after the Treasury Building, yet the Treasury Building has been able to stand the test of time that the former National Insurance Building did not. Therefore, what we found is that the Treasury Building, even though it has done well and is structurally sound, is not really fit for purpose at this present time. As you know, in the past, it was used by the Ministry of Finance and several Government departments. A lot of internal work has been done to the Treasury Building but very little external work for the façade.

What we also know is that if people do not live in a city, shop in a city and do not own it, then the city will die. What we are trying to do as a nation is to revitalize, re-digitise and re-imagine the city of Bridgetown. This is what the BTII, through the Chairman who I can see in my sight and the Member for the City of Bridgetown is trying to do which is to bring back that vibrancy to Bridgetown. Bringing back that vibrancy is part of the Golden Square as you would have seen that has become so important and has contributed so much to the heritage and culture of this country.

It continues to do so. We are happy that BTII was able to re-imagine and re-develop Golden Square into something that we can now be proud of. It re-developed the Constitution River that Members spoke of and how we are able to get the Constitution River back. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, schooners travelled up the Constitution River years ago and there is actual

pictures that you can see them going that river that it is now. This is what caused Roebuck Street to develop the way it is because that is where the merchants were receiving goods from schooners up the Constitution River. This is something that we have to understand our history and recognise sometimes that you have to go back to go forward. This is a reality.

What we have to do and doing through this vesting is to give an opportunity for an investor to revitalize, take the Treasury Building, put in commercial entities and a cultural hub underneath and put in studio and two-bedroom

apartments above for people to come back and live in Bridgetown. This is not only seen as by itself, but it must be seen as a total redevelopment of the whole city scape. Mr. Speaker, I remember many years ago when Dame Billie Miller, the former Member for the City of Bridgetown, put forward to the then Members of Parliament around 2003 or 2004 of what they wanted to do to re-vitalize the city of Bridgetown. It included careenage development. It included what the Member spoke about, which is making the boardwalk along the careenage.

It included the fountains, and I was so happy that on Republic Day the fountains were working in the careenage. It really blessed my heart to see what the city of Bridgetown could be. I do not know why we do not have back the fountains. I would like to see the fountains full-time. It is something that we need to work on because you go to other countries where you see fountains well-lit, and it becomes a nighttime attraction. You have people playing music and outdoor dining, et cetera, around the waterfront. This is the kind of Bridgetown that we want. This is the vision that we have for our capital city.

Part of that vision includes the BTII, and all the developments included, and the vesting of the Treasury Building in the BTII so that they can give a Request

for Proposal (RFP) and get a developer involved to re-develop that space. We are not going to stop there. We are looking at re-developing all the way from Needham's Point along the Bay Street corridor, Screw Dock, and Carlisle House, all that way down. It goes all the way down to Kensington to redevelop that entire stretch. It will be putting in hotels where necessary, cafeterias where necessary, coffee shops, outdoor dining, all of that and bring Bridgetown into the 21st century and make it a modern attractive city that all of us can be proud of and that is exactly what we intend to do. Mr. Speaker, the journey of a thousand miles starts with that first step, but we are not at the first step because we have done the Golden Square, we are about to do the Hyatt Ziva Barbados and I understand that the Hyatt, as you know, had some setbacks with its financing, but they are soon about to start the construction of the Hyatt Ziva Barbados. We are going into negotiations for the Carlisle Bay, the Carlisle Carpark and adjoining that property on to the Carlisle House to make another hotel development there. We are in negotiations deciding what we are going to do with a inaudible called The Legends Hotel which is to move to put a hotel where the procurement centre for Government is now, Central Purchasing Department, and move that to another location and have the opportunity to build another tourism development there. Of course, we have all the other tourism developments in the Screw Dock/Pierhead Area, all the way through. This is the vision that was, not only in the physical development plan that the former Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central worked so hard on

and the current Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central worked very, very hard on as Minister for Planning and Development and also the vision of the Prime Minister to see this country grow and to see this country develop because at the end of the day, what we need is capital project, what we need is growth in this country. The only way we can get growth is by Government, the private sector, foreign direct investment, and every person in Barbados working to achieve that objective to see this country improve and to see this country get better and the only way we can do that is by making it attractive. This is but one. It is 2 106 square metres of State land that we are looking at and seeking the permission of this Parliament to vest in the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.). It has seven floors, and it is a total of 55 810 square feet. It currently has an elevator, and we anticipate that that elevator will have to be moved according to how the design will be implemented. What we aimed to do is to now only have opportunities for commercial activity, but also for residential activity in this. Let me take the opportunity to, and I beg your permission, Mr. Speaker, really sound the significant work that the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) of Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.) has been doing. It is really tremendous work that he has been doing and I have been working tirelessly with him on the Sam Lord's Castle redevelopment. It has been a long, long time in coming and we are poised to finish, certainly, the infrastructure work of that development in December and it is a massive, massive undertaking. The Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.) has led the way on that development between Mr. Brian Beg with 420 rooms. It would be the largest hotel in Barbados in the first instance employing 340 people going up to 1 000 people and that is just in the hotel, not to mention all of the spin-offs and all of the other subsidiary opportunities for the people of Barbados and then, of course, with the vision of the Prime Minister, next door is another, I think 54 acres -- I stand corrected, it may be 48 acres -- for opportunity for another tourism development next door to Sam Lord's Castle. I think that if we put all of those things together, if we put the redevelopment of the Constitution River in the constituency of St. Michael South Central ... I looked back because I know and I imagine that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would be speaking on this matter because it is something that she worked very, very hard on and very, very tirelessly. I remember when I was a new Minister of Transport Works and Maintenance and, in the Cabinet of Barbados the Prime Minister would look at me and say: "There is too much bush in the Constitution River. Go and get it cleared." Honourable Members would remember, and I would have to be down there on weekends with the bush-wacker team and so on and we are in the Constitution River cleaning the bush and that would happen month after month especially when the rainy season was coming in. The Prime Minister used to say: "The rainy season is about to come in. If you do not go and get that bush cleaned, Minister, you are going to have flooding."

We used to have to be out there cleaning the bush all the time to the point that we bought equipment just to go and clean the Constitution River bush. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy remembers it well. We used to be out there on weekends making sure that there was not bush in the Constitution River so that they would not have flooding and now I am so proud to drive by and walk by and go into Queen's Park and to look into the Constitution River and see it now a river and no longer bush. I am so happy to see it and see how transformation and how an idea in somebody's head can become a reality for the benefit of everyone. It is a tremendous transformation and I look forward, with the approval of this Parliament once we agree to the vesting of the Treasury Building in the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.), to the transformation of the facade external as well as the internal so that we can get residential, commercial and cultural opportunities for the people of Barbados right next door, our neighbour, right here and to be the second step in the revitalisation of our capital city.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Resolution do now pass.

(A rousing round of applause)

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

Ms. M. K-A. CADDLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I reflect on the very lofty policy discussions that took place in this Honourable House earlier today and I am glad to see that such important policy and practical matters are in the capable hands of those who participated in the debate, but, Sir, today I rise to reflect from a different place.

I rise almost to talk to this Honourable Chamber through you, Sir, about "a tale of two cities" as one famous writer, once put it, but I make that reference because we often talk about the City of Bridgetown and the idea of Bridgetown regeneration and renewal as if the very discreet area that we call Bridgetown is all that we mean. Across the world, people talk about the greater Toronto area and all kinds of things and really, I talk about the greater Bridgetown area and in the greater Bridgetown area there are two cities. There is The City of Bridgetown, strictly speaking, but, Sir, the constituency of St. Michael South Central is an urban constituency and the Honourable Prime Minister talks all the time about the notion of separating the way that people live. We can mark all of the demarcation lines that we want but people live how they live. People live in communities, they do not live in constituencies and so one of the very important things that when I was working very closely with the Honourable Prime Minister on the notion of tourism investment and re-investment in that greater Bridgetown area and Honourable Members

may recall the Tourism Investment Forum that the Government had in April, I believe it was, of 2019 where we hosted local and overseas investors to come and understand the investment opportunities in that area but throughout that conversation and it must remain throughout the conversation. Throughout that conversation we insisted, both with investors here and abroad, that there can be no tourism redevelopment in this area without urban renewal and urban regeneration. In all of our discussions it was and continues to be considered to be a condition of development in that area and the former Honourable Member for the City insisted year after year, conversation after conversation that no hotel development would go up in the City unless it was also accompanied by urban regeneration with regard to the housing stock. With regard to infrastructure, with regard to the employment and the development and use of skills of the people in those communities so while I must agree as the former Minister responsible for Investment, while I must agree with my very good friend from Christ Church West that we have to target growth in this sector, and this is about growth in this sector. It cannot be about growth on the balance sheet without being about urban regeneration in those areas. That has always been the target. That has always been the ideology of this government, so I told you in my opening that I... for me this is a matter not so much for policy but of personal reflection in a lot of ways. In 2017 I wrote along with some members of my team a local manifesto for St. Michael South Central because I wanted to make sure that they were objectives that we set that people can look on years later and say, "Well she said she was gonna do this so did she do it?" It was very important to me based on the conversations I had; the Honourable Member who introduced the Resolution referred to it. It was very important to me having visited Halls Road and the many people that live in those Carrington Village communities and having heard from them about the issues with the bush and the flooding and the rodents and all of the other things that were plaguing them it was important to me to be able to bring some relief and to address that issue. It would so happen that at the time there was a dormant project on the books of the government that had been left by the previous administration because that administration could not find the funding that had to accompany the official borrowing that they had done. In other words, there was a small amount, a nominal amount that had to be paid by the government in order for the Constitution River Project to start they were not able to find those resources and so the project did not happen it lagged, it stalled. When I came to service in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Investment one of the things that I had to do was to review all of the things that were lagging on those books and see what we can do and it so happened that that Constitution River Redevelopment Project Phase 3 remembering the two phases that had gone before was one that stood out to me, not just because of the location but because we had a situation where we had to avoid and the Member for Christ

Church East Central will attest one has to avoid paying commitment fees on loans that you've taken on which you are not drawing down. Thus, it was a win-win for the government for the government and the people of Barbados and St. Michael South Central.

Asides.

Ms. M. K-A. CADDLE: to bring this project to fruition. The stars aligned as it were, and we were able with the support of the Honourable Prime Minister at the time who I must say also insisted that the project had to go forward because this was something that meant something to the people of this community. You know it is easy. It happens easily to feel almost as if you are languishing in a situation where infrastructure is degraded and depleted and you wonder if anybody remembers who you are and where you are and I would daresay and those of us who represent in particular St. Michael constituencies, urban constituencies have to make sure part of our job is to be with our people and even in cases where a particular project or development cannot happen at a particular time that we make sure that people are heard and seen and understood and so it was important to be able to bring that project to fruition but beyond the infrastructure issues the other thing that we heard very clearly from those communities had to do with employment. I know other members would attest. It had to do with the fact that you know one of the things that I would say really triggered my own interest in political service was a particular conversation I had in 2016 with a group of young men who I then realised had never worked. They had come of age during the previous administration when things were economically depressed and had never found the opportunity to work since they left school and so the conversation about employment was also one. I mean these kinds of things do not happen in pockets they happen together. People who are experiencing flooding an overgrown bush and poor infrastructure are often times also experiencing unemployment and so we then had an opportunity and it was a vision that we had as a part of the local manifesto for St. Michael South Central to be able to bring an area for commercial and we called it in that document the Halls Road Commercial Village and I am saying this to say that this was prior to two elections ago. This was a vision that is now being realised as part of this urban regeneration that includes this Treasury Building that we are discussing today but we envision that the Halls Road Commercial; Village would be an area where people who live in the community would be able to establish themselves as entrepreneurs and the stars aligned again because the then Minister of Youth was able to work with us to establish a building blocks project for St. Michael South central that would mean that not only are we talking about a constitution river canal redevelopment but at the same time we are bringing in a commercial village so young people can feel as if this space really belongs to

them and yes we want the small boats to come in and berth which is one of the brilliant parts of that but we do not only want small boats to come in and berth we want the people from the community to also feel that this place 'nice up for we.' That is a part of our work. To make sure that people feel ownership of this space and so we defined that this area along the canal, along the embankment would be the St. Michael South Central Building Blocks Project and Sir I will say that across three Ministers of Youth, I have been privileged to be able to work closely with each to this day to make sure that that is a reality. I speak to it today because I want to make sure that as with such developments we do not focus on the big works and forget about the small works that will really affect people because I did have occasion to remind the current Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment, my good friend the Honourable Member for St. John, that we would want to make sure that the direction for those kiosks for which people have applied for in an open application process, (because we wanted to make things clear and transparent), but for which people from the area who were told that this was their "Building Blocks" project have already applied, but I find myself having to answer questions about when are works going to start. Therefore, I use this opportunity to remind colleagues that the Constitution River Redevelopment Project is not complete until the St. Michael South Central "Building Blocks" project is complete, because there is to be no tourism redevelopment, there is to be no large infrastructure redevelopment without bringing people along, without urban renewal and regeneration.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is another component of that project that is important to the St. Michael South Central community. In their first match of the Republic Bank Cup, the Weymouth Wales team defeated their opponents 12/0 in a netball match. We have been seeing some big numbers in goals being scored so that was not the highest, but I mentioned that to say that the Weymouth Wales team, born, bred, developed in Carrington Village has for many years been excelling while roaming the streets of Barbados without a home ground. I can no longer support it, not a team that has produced so many national players, not a team that has done so well over the years, you cannot have people walking up and down with nowhere to call home. Thankfully, having appealed to the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Community Empowerment on this matter, they have agreed in principle to be able to have the Weymouth "B" Pasture as the team has requested to be the home ground for the Weymouth Wales players. However, it means that as a condition of the handover of the Constitution River Project that the field has to be regraded and reconstituted to football standard. Sir, those of us who have ran about on football fields would know that that would mean that there has to be sand underneath and the turf on top, that you do not just roll out any of the old mould that was left there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you are wondering why I am talking about this minutia in this forum it is because this is the bread and butter of what makes communities great, what makes the youth in communities to be seen, heard and understood and so between the major infrastructural works, the realisation of the St. Michael South Central “Building Blocks” project which happens to be on the Bridgetown side (because they do not have any land on the other side), and so we are making use of that, but the truth is that the Halls Road embankment and river is really a part of that Carrington Village community, life, and space and so it is important that those people feel that that is theirs. Hence, these three elements have to come together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member who led off the Resolution spoke to his work in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation. In this conversation about Bridgetown there has been a notion, there has been an idea put out there, (that I cannot say I disagree with), for there being a dedicated management company for the development of Bridgetown, so that all of the individual buildings and spaces that we say we want to develop, that there is a focus on having an entity that helps to guide that. It need not be a Government entity -- goodness knows, we do not necessarily need any more of those -- but an entity that guides or oversees that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown would be able to speak better to this than I can, but in some cases, it is simply a question of making it look more appealing and that if the businesses that exist in Bridgetown agree to how they want this area to look and they agree to contribute to that kind of fund, then a company can manage that. Sir, it is similar to how we have in the north of the island and in this very area of Greater Bridgetown, we have agreed as part of planning obligations that new tourism development projects must contribute to a fund; in this case we call it the Bridgetown Rehabilitation Fund, I believe, but one that will go to the upkeep and urban renewal of the surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, until such a management company for the City is established, if that is going to be the case, the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation has more than stood in the breach -- from Bridgetown, to St. Philip, to St. Lucy, to St. Peter where I believe they are working on a Six Men’s commercial village as well - but this is an entity that has really stepped up and with few resources has been able to deliver major things for urban Barbados. I think it is worth acknowledging the work of Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have always felt that the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation needed to be larger to be able to cover more ground more quickly, but I believe that the work that has gone on in the Greater Bridgetown area, led by the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation, shows how much we can do with limited resources.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I reflect now on how the former Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and I worked together, not just as neighbours and constituencies, but also when I had responsibility for the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Investment, to make sure that people were always visible, particularly the people of the City of Bridgetown and St. Michael South Central to make sure that people remain at the center of development.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I recall that even on the Halls Road “Building Blocks” Project, the former Honourable Member was always supportive and has always understood the kind of give-and-take of how we work together to make communities great. I know that that sentiment and partnership will continue and is continuing with the present Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all that is left for me to do is to lend my support to this vesting, another what I would call legacy project, one that was started in collaboration with the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation with a real vision. When we asked people what they wanted to see the Treasury Building became they said that this was a way that could bring back real life into the City, to get some young people who may not stay here forever, maybe for two, three or four years, and some single people, some young couples, some people who want to come home in the evening from work, then go on maybe the bottom floor, have a coffee, listen to music, that was the idea for it. It was then put out to see what could be designed, who could design something to fit these specifications.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know that others who come after me may have conversations about the issue of housing and how we make sure that people have ownership. I know certainly that in those communities that face Halls Road and the Constitution River, that we have unfinished business, that we have serious unfinished business that has to do with the transfer of title for former tenantry lands, and as long as I have the strength to stand in this Place while that is not attended to, I will speak to that. I grew up in a house where I could sit in my living room and reach through the window and touch my neighbour, Sir. I know the pressure that puts on communities and on people. I know the pressure it puts when you save a little bit, and you finally get a little car to drive but you have nowhere to park it. If everybody in that tiny road, Bibby’s Gap, Trainline Road, Marlhole Road, were able to save a little dollar and buy a little car, what would happen? The garbage truck would not be able to come through there. People would not be able to park. Roads are being degraded because they were never built for that much traffic, so we expect people to live 2022 lives in tenantry conditions. It has to be fixed. It has to be a part of the urban renewal and regeneration of this country.

I will tell you that I am so happy that I represent St. Michael South Central because I believe that communities like these can be models for how we keep communities small and together and intimate with a certain level of development, a certain level of progress. We can do it. We should not feel that because people only have a few square feet to call home that they should not live like kings and queens. My parents made us feel that we were queens growing up on that little block where I could put my hand through the window and touch my neighbour. Let us lift the living standards of people in these communities so that they do not feel that Barbados is progressing, and they are just watching the whole thing float by. Sir, with those few words, I commend this Resolution to this Honourable Place.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown.

Mr. C.A. LANE: Sir, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not too often that you get two bites at the cherry, but I could not go without speaking on the Resolution. I am hearing that it depends on the size of the cherry. Mr. Speaker, I really want to start by thanking the former Members of Parliament for The City of Bridgetown for really rolling the wicket I have spoken about before in terms of the excitement. A lot of times when people question me about The City of Bridgetown, they question me about the challenges and the difficulties, and I like to talk to them about the potential and the excitement and the pride I have representing The City of Bridgetown. Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison is how I refer to it, and when you think of Bridgetown and Greater Bridgetown, you think about constituencies like The City and, like the Honourable Member who just spoke from St. Michael South Central, you think about St. Michael South, you think about Christ Church West and the Honourable Member who is leading and piloting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like every Member of Parliament to understand that in this House there are many rooms, and if it was not so I would not have said it is so. When I think about Bridgetown I think about every member of Barbados, Bridgetown being our capital city, the capital city of Barbados, not the capital city of Bridgetown. It is the capital city of Barbados, and hence the development of Bridgetown is the development of Barbados. I believe in the saying which we have -- if you share in the work, you have to share in the bounty -- and it works the other way around, because I believe that Bridgetown can bring a bounty to Barbados, and if we are going to share in the bounty, of course, I would like to share in the work in The City as well. It can work both ways, Mr. Speaker. Like the Member before me said, this is really about urban renewal, urban regeneration,

development and lifting the standards of the people of Barbados; particularly and directly those constituencies that are touched by Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison, but right across Barbados.

With the partnership of the Urban Development Commission, the Senior Minister responsible for Infrastructure, the Ministry of Housing and, of course, the Barbados Tourism Incorporated led by a very competent Chairman, I believe that this regeneration continues to move at the correct pace although it could be a little faster, but definitely in the correct direction. One of the things I want to do in my contribution, Sir, is really have a serious look at where we are going with this urban regeneration. Sometimes when we mention these projects, you would almost think if you do not understand that it is a patchwork of development, when really and truly if you take a step back and look at it, you will realise it is really comprehensive development of Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison.

We can talk about the Screw Dock and housing and villa plans for there. We can talk about the Hyatt. We can talk about the Platinum Mile if we want to go all the way down to the south. We are now vesting land in the Treasury to ensure that we have what I would call historic housing; historic in the sense that we are putting people right in the flat centre of the capital city, and also in an historic way taking a historic building and repurposing it for its time. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you add on the Baxter's Road project, the Constitution River, the work for Queen's Park and you continue down and look at all of these projects collectively, not only are we looking at billions with a "B" in development, we are looking at the overall improvement of our city and of our country. If we can use our imagination and if Golden Square Freedom Park and even the Fairchild Street Market are anything to go by, the wonderful work of the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTI) and the Government, we can see that with all of these projects implemented that the people are involved. Remember we are here first and foremost, primarily, for the people.

The people can benefit, Sir. The people can benefit from the aesthetics, Sir. The people can benefit from the development and economic enfranchisement, because with projects come employment. With projects comes the opportunity to invest. With projects comes the ability to build, start and expand businesses so that people will be the main beneficiaries of what it is we are proposing here this afternoon as we continue along the line of vesting land in the BTI to carry out this Treasury housing project.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to add simply parcels to this already well-laid wicket. I, as the present Member of Parliament for The City of Bridgetown, plan to add value to what I came and found. I came and found a Government. I came and found former Members of Parliament, as I said,

in the right direction, going in the right way, and I have had the privilege of persons reaching out to me and presenting great ideas of what they plan to do for The City of Bridgetown in the urban renewal plan. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not just hot-air talk. We already have plans, costings and so on, and one of the things I am doing is looking at putting together a task force for The City in conjunction with, led by and advised by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, because he is doing the same thing for Speightstown.

I believe that all four cities in Barbados should do some kind of twinning, sistering and brothering as we bring the nation along. I do not want people to believe The City of Bridgetown is Corey Lane and that Corey Lane is The City of Bridgetown. The cities of Bridgetown, Speightstown, Hometown and Oistins will be the people of Barbados; put simply. We have already started our discussions on that, Sir. What I want to add to that is that I have also been in communication with the City of New York with the permission of the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in relation to doing a sister city initiative there. We plan to partner and sister with a number of cities across the world. Why, Sir? As I said earlier about partnerships; that is how we are going to get out of the COVID pandemic and the economic worries that lie with us up to today with that, and the ten years that went before with the international shocks and other shocks; political shocks that we had for ten years prior. How are we going to do it? Partnership Sir. Therefore, with permission as I said with the Senior Minister, Minister responsible for foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, have started discussions and the Ministry is now drafting that first agreement. At the end of the day, it is okay to have all of these plans and pictures, but it costs to care, and it costs to build, everybody in here knows that.

Mr. Speaker, we have already had the discussion with the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. I would like to thank the Director and the Chairman. We have already had the discussion with the Barbados Police Service, the Psychiatric Hospital, the National Conservation Commission, the Private Sector Association, the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, and some of the developers working on some of the major projects. Sir, they toured the City with me. We have also had discussions with the Urban Development Commission.

Now, the task force and myself planned to be the glue that really brings these projects together and the glue that actually keeps it together and helps us to go out there on the market to ensure that the ideas that I am thinking of adding to the already good work of the team that they can come to fruition because they will need substantial financing to do these big projects. Sir, I will mention some just so that the public's appetite is wet in relation to where we are going for the City of Bridgetown, and of course we want to do things like green scapes to bring beauty to the

City, but to also bring a level of coolness to it. Cool in the way in which it looks and cool in the way in which it feels. Everybody knows what is happening this week in relation to the heat, but if we can get more green spaces, green walls, and green banks in the City of Bridgetown we can actually bring down the temperature and we can have an ecstatically pleasing City of Bridgetown once again.

We have proposals for beautiful and practical seating, seating with lighting, seating with USB, seating with Wi-Fi, so that people not only come to the City and try to get out as fast as possible, but they can sit comfortably, they can eat in the City, they can work in the City, apart from living in the City after we vest the Treasury Building in the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. for that purpose.

Now, I did not just want the people who made the presentation to me to come and say let us do these canopies. One of the things we want to, and the initial thought was to have the people of the City and the schools of the City, but I am thinking more now on reflection for the people of Barbados to have some kind of competition for a theme for the City. Will it be a City of love? Will it be a City of flying fish? Will it be the City of anything? I want to put that out to the people of Barbados so that we have some kind of theme running through the City.

Lights and cameras are something that we have spoken about for a long time, and it is something that is desperately needed, because of the times we are in even more so. Bike lanes and bike parking spaces. A lot more solar technology and solar lighting. The pedal boats and at that romantic pedal boats. We have now moved from the Warf to the Constitution River, and we want to tap into the whole idea of the heritage of it. A lot of people may not know, but a lot of people used to load up some goods down by Screw Dock and they used to make their way into Roebuck Street to ply their goods using some small boats. We will now be able to link the heritage to have these romantic lit pedal boats, so that if the Honourable Member to my left wants to take the lady friend up the careenage in these nice boats when the night comes just for a quick chat and return, and buy a burger or beer, we will be good to go. These are things that I believe will add serious value to nightlife in the City, so we can picture the beautiful lights, we can picture the fountains being lit, and we can picture the romantic boats moving through the City. Mr. Speaker, I am feeling it now. I can see it and I can feel it. I am hoping that the others can also feel it.

One of the other things that we have to address is really the garbage, being able to compose and dispose of garbage, and to also treat sensitively and compassionately to the socially displaced that make a home of the City and sometimes they do not do so in the most orderly fashion. That is something that is put on the table in the proposal

that the task force will be looking at in conjunction with all of the partners.

Another thing is murals. There is something called mural, a historic heritage tourism that is on the boom. They are people who travel to cities and countries just to capture or participate in murals. Just last week, there was a team from the United States of America through the United States Embassy here doing a number of free murals and graffiti with their professionals. Again, partnerships in the pursuit of positive progression for the people.

Therefore, the whole night life and the redevelopment of the City is one that I no doubt support and with these few words, I just wanted to add that this something that I not only give my full support to, but I plan to give all of my energy and creativity to make sure that the City of Bridgetown and Barbados can be the best that it can be. I thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I am trying to precisely understand what my friend Mr. Lane was trying to suggest about cruising in this boat with a young lady. Sir, I want to make my brief contribution to this discussion on the development of Bridgetown. In talking about the development, it is obvious that we cannot go along the common path that we are accustomed to, especially the past shaped by the colonial past itself. The development and infrastructure of the City of Bridgetown came as a consequence of the specific interest in the very early times and the interest in sugar and rum, so we ended up building a whole set of buildings around what is called the Warf side. You had all of these bond houses in the very early days stretched across that Warf side and then eventually you see the development of the commercial development in the City of Bridgetown coming into what is called Broad Street. Those infrastructures from the bridge straight down to where they say the Wharf boys used to enjoy themselves where they had a public toilet down to the bottom and so on. That is just a little historical discourse.

Sir, the colonial hands, the merchants, and merchant capital shaped the City of Bridgetown, the original people who probably would have been around Bridgetown, nothing is mentioned about that, or nothing is mentioned about the efforts to preserve the contribution of the labour class, which means that you are somewhere down in the pecking order for being part of the labour class. Nothing is held there, but I think with the exception of the slave hut to the back of St. Mary's. In Mason Hall Street, there is a building there that I believe if the Barbados Tourism Investments is responsible for what we are trying to achieve and also what I believe is a necessity, especially

transforming from a colony to a republic, we should see some evidence of the modern thinking of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. I think that is about the last one, and I visited there I think about two weeks or so ago and I took some pictures. I believe that the state should try to find out who is the owner of that property there in Mason Hall Street. I heard there is another one somewhere around there. If it is not a slave hut it has to be a hut belonging to the indentured servants of the time. We want a more central presence in the city of Bridgetown.

We do not have to be just looking at colonial historic buildings and allowing NGO units along with the BTI to determine what our heritage is supposed to be and what we must represent in our main cities, especially in relation to our urban development. There is too much of that that has been going on prior to becoming a republic. I would expect a level of new consciousness to be influencing the direction. The people who worked hard and built the buildings do not even have a presence today because of their contribution to the development of Bridgetown. There is nothing to represent labour. The leader of the main trade union movement should be the person talking about this. At least, we should have some monument in the city representing the contribution of labour to the physical construct of the city of Bridgetown itself.

This is one of my main concerns. Therefore, I would like to see a monument emerge there. The other thing is that I was just speaking to my colleague, sitting to my right, in a very noble and friendly way and not implying anything negative. I think BTII owns the property on Bay Street which is a car park adjacent to Laurie Dash Toy Store. I am corrected. Neal Massy is the owner. This is the problem. This is why I am always very skeptical about the ownership of these properties and how they go from one person to the other. These people continue to perpetuate a certain impression about the contribution that we have made to the development of Barbados itself. Too many people unconsciously do not understand that they are wiping our people out of Barbados' history.

I am very concerned about that, but it is alleged because the research has to be done. It is alleged that there is a burial ground somewhere on that location. I do not know if we go and erect a hotel or construct something there but leave nothing symbolic of even that burial ground which I know those people were not buried in any wholesome manner. They were probably just tossed in the hole which may not have been even six feet deep but probably six inches below the soil. When you dig, you would see a lot of fossils scattered all around there. The same way that we pay some attention to Newton in Christ Church, we have to understand these historic sites across Barbados is important to our development. I would not condemn and cannot condemn at least the Government for this progressive effort.

It should be the Central Bank rather than just the Treasury Building because I really believe that we excluded too much. I am glad to see that the Government decided that it takes a special person to make decisions of this kind because people do not easily accept working class people coming to live in the midst of this big commercial area. These are realities that sometimes we are afraid to talk about them. People want to know what we are doing with these rustics coming to now live almost in the center of Broad Street when you take up the Treasury Building now and ordinary people can get this opportunity. A Government has to be either made up of erratic individuals or people with a sound mind that is visionary and also clearly understanding there are some wrongs that we have to put right.

Therefore, I want to compliment the Government for at least creating a space in the city of Bridgetown. Presently, you are directly on the borders of Broad Street. Hence, while people would like to see the Hyatt Hotel, a lot of people do not want to see Nelson Street and Wellington Street. This is the kind of mindset that we have created over the last few years because they are not supposed to be part of the city. The city should be made up of decent people and the ownership should probably be of non-black Barbadians. It brings me to another point, Sir. I need to see black ownership on Broad Street too. I would like to see the BTIA taking all of that into consideration. The Honourable Member has a right also to look after his family's interest.

Your great-grandmother, Andria Gibbs, who in the early 20th Century was one of the main black owners in the city of Bridgetown. His great-grandmother owned a property in Bridgetown that was a commercial entity and very few Barbadians or even historians speak of the work of his great-grandmother, but you have an opportunity. If you do not do it for yourself and family, I do not know who will do it for you. This location is still a major one and still resides in the family of the Honourable Member. They still own the land above the St. Mary's Church, but no one knows that. We continue to talk about Cave Shepherd, even the old Harrisons building, where Wilkinson, Mannings and Challenor Limited building once stood and where this bank is. However, we need to highlight, even if we do not reconstruct anything we need to have a level of signage, some monuments, and symbols across the city.

I heard someone made the point today that you need to feel an integral part of the development of society. You need to own something. You need to feel part of it. You cannot walk around throughout a city and feel proud if you are at a certain level of thinking and feel proud of what other people are doing to us over and over again. It is because of the physical things that you might not be conscious of the harm that they are doing to the society itself, but these are psychological encumbrances that affect

the lives of ordinary people in the city of Bridgetown. It is the reason why we had to move Lord Horatio Nelson Statue. Therefore, you cannot do patchwork. It cannot be a piece meal exercise. You move Lord Horatio Nelson Statue because I do not want my children or grandchildren to come up Broad Street and look into the face of this man.

We went through an exercise before that where people felt they were making a progressive move and turned the statue around in another direction. Now, we need to play our part as a Government. When you are talking about Bridgetown, I think I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central make the point that it is not just the immediate surroundings, but you have in Bank Hall a building which is the former home of Sir Frank Worrell. The Empire Club apparently cut down a few feet off the wall so you can look off the playing field to see the house, but the State needs to intervene. The National Trust went in and affixed a plaque, but the plaque appears to have dropped off the house. The house is now in a state of disrepair.

Some of the agencies within the Government must step in and help the family. They do not have to put the family back into the same position that they were in but make life better for the family because we need to have an interest in that house in Bank Hall that is the home of Sir Frank Worrell. We are not just calling names. It is similar to Andria Gibbs. She was a black woman in the early 20th Century who meant something to the black people during that time. She owned a school and taught black children. I was discussing the matter with the family and they were trying to find out what it is that is so magical or extraordinary about this woman that she had a very sound education but never went to any formal secondary school or university or anything like that but held classes for young people in the early 20th century and I am talking about the first quarter of the 20th century and likewise, the contribution of Sir Frank Worrell cannot be ignored. The Jamaicans understood the importance of Sir Frank Worrell to the development of the Caribbean, and they put a statue in Jamaica for Sir Frank Worrell. We keep ignoring these things and believing that because they do not have any money value they are not of importance to the development of our people, but the Jamaicans understood what we did not and still do not understand. Mr. Eric Williams was very clear inaudible to the contribution of Mr. Frank Worrell to the development to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Eric Williams said that when Mr. Frank Worrell became the first black captain of the West Indies Cricket team, he said that is symbolic of the representation of the political party to which he led. He was sending a message. In just a few statements, he was preaching volumes of material to us about uplifting the quality of the people that everybody ignores every day. That is why I said the workers, people, are central to the development. Do you know what it is in the early 50s and that when little back boys were running

about on cricket fields, a British game called cricket and then we started to produce people like Mr. Frank Worrell, a great of all times, and produced Sir Garfield Sobers (now the Right Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers) too. Go to the Bay Land and see the Right Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers' house now and people are about here talking about cricket. I am talking about genuine unavowed transformation of society itself. We have come clear and said look, we are in a different stage now, this is a republic, and these are things we must do. No debate all day and singing praise and bowing heads to any Queen and a new King. I want all of you to reconnect with the greatness of black men and women. This is a positive step when we decide that we are going to make sure we create that space in The City and it is a bold step. It is not just positive it is a bold step because I am hearing the debate already. "Man, you want to put people to live there" so all of the things about the nice things on Floor 1 and Floor 2 the people are asking, "Are you putting people to live there now? What is going on in Barbados?" and the so-called intelligent is the people who would distort everything and confuse society. These people are doing all types of foolishness. They build polo grounds and people do not have anywhere to live, a landless people and the Government is trying to make sure that it reaches out and help the most vulnerable in the society, the landless people so whether we put it in the middle of Broad Street itself or in Swan Street, they cannot be no issue more important than the lives of the people especially people who build the City of Bridgetown. There is too much absence of our presence in The City of Bridgetown and many other locations across Barbados that is why you would hear me, from time to time, shift the urban debate up to St. George, up to Drax Hall. I sleep and sometimes spend sleepless nights because I do not believe that this man should be owning any land in Barbados at this time, so it is only about urban, it is not only a piecemeal exercise in the urban community, it is national development as well. Land ownership is one of the most fundamental questions in the streets, not just the few applications you see at the Urban Development Commission (U.D.C.) or at the National Housing Corporation (N.H.C.). I am very passionate about black people not owning land in a country that has been held captives, cultivate the same land, had to ask for permission to stop on the land even after emancipation and up to 100 plus years ago, they call it that, because they were talking about manumission and all the different kinds of terms they were using very early and nearly 100 years or so after, we were still fighting about land in the 1930s and all like now we are still fighting about land. I have calls on my phone from people saying, "I do not know where I am going to sleep tonight" and you have people who own ... in fact, they are people in this country who had land and do not even know where the land is because they live out in England all their lives and their children have land in Barbados and black people are running about here asking, "Do you know anybody who has a room for rent?". When we are talking about

development, we have to be very serious and this is about radical transformation, this is not about any gradualism. We are telling people we are going to do this thing and it is going to bring me back. Sir, I would not engage you in this now since you have granted me permission to go as infinite as I have, but it is going to bring me back to this talk about these 10 000 units in five years and the debate that I had in here recently on trying to even get 60 units when you are talking about national development because I started to get doubts. When people begin to get worried about the national development and you are building 16 houses in my constituency, and I have to be fighting to get some and you are still building 10 000. I want to know 10 000 for who? Then I want to know, by who? This debate is going to stretch very wide because that is one debate in itself, especially since you have certain limits that you allow in terms of time.

Mr. SPEAKER: That the Standing Orders allow, Sir.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you, Sir, but you preside over the whole thing.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is correct.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: I personally believe that this is a great effort and I believe that we need to be able to identify some of the areas around The City that need greater development not just the construction of houses, but also for aesthetical purposes. I saw the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown unofficially showed me some aesthetics that look something like Dubai. When I saw the different arrangements, the vegetation, and a dream which he has for The City of Bridgetown it means that the agencies of the State must also allow him to come and make a presentation and saw this is how I feel. I am sure that other formal Members before him had an opportunity to share dialogue with the agencies that were responsible for the development of Bridgetown, all around the Boardwalk and all of that. Other persons, the representatives of the people of The City, this one must have those same privileges of saying whether he wants the Boardwalk to leave from The City and pass Holetown or whether he want it to pass Oistins Town and how it should be done. He should be given, Sir, the same opportunity to be able to make a presentation. I do not see anything wrong with that. I am not saying that it should not have been done, I am saying that is a precedent that I would love to see especially giving the Representative of The City the right to go before the Board of the B.T.I.A. or before the National Conservation Commission (N.C.C.), for example, because a lot of it is about not just physical structures in the sense, it is about the vegetation and artistic kind of work for The City of Bridgetown. I saw it, Sir, and although I do not romanticise much, I saw it and I was very impressed. I believe it is something that can help to create greater shape and to bring the beauty of vegetation into The City itself. I

also believe that we must find a kind of physical network of how we are going to link Heroes Square, Independence Square, and the Freedom Park at Golden Square. I do not know if you are going to do it by using red bricks or anything like that and we can travel. I believe that we should even see a transformation of the physical development between what is happening at national Heroes Square and Parliament. I know Parliament got this one gate open and you probably would have a great say over that. I get frighten when I see too many chains all around me, but that Parliament gate over there always closed but we should look at a way even if it calls for the diverting of traffic through High Street up Roebuck Street at certain hours of the day and then you would go through High Street and up Roebuck Street. It is the same thing sometimes when you go through Marhill Street and come back to the same corner. The engineers should be able to say look this is how we are going to do it and this whole area should be relatively free for people during the course of the day to walk around and even as a park you have proper seating facilities from the modules that you shared with me just now are things that can be applied to in that entire area to create greater beauty in the City itself but all I am asking is that whatever we do put people at the centre of the efforts. I am not so interested in the preservation of buildings that all we do is to contribute labour to the building, but nobody has a symbol of our presence in history. Not even the fine artists. I do not know when was the last I time I saw the pages of the National Heroes even during November, whatever month you do not see the paintings of National Heroes nowhere on any building. You do not even see a picture out of the Advocate, or the Nation stuck anywhere in Bridgetown of the Heroes and that is not the way. They did not treat the British Royal Family in that manner because sometimes people got these things all in their homes along with a picture of Jesus Christ. The Jews got their own thing out there. All I am asking is in the development process, I do not even know who sits on the board for the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc because I tend to believe that these people have a view of how development must go in the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. I just feel that they have a view, and the Ministry of Culture probably should be playing a more central role and even architects should be playing more of a central role in the planning and in the construct especially if we are going to reclaim certain historic memories in the City of Bridgetown. It cannot be only about if you are building it then okay. If you take the responsibility for building, like how you built Golden Square alright, but after you build Golden Square what it is that make you believe that you come up with an idea and nobody else can question the idea. Why should somebody working in the Ministry of Culture have to ask the BTII if they can use Golden Square? That makes no sense. Why should the Ministry of Culture not be participating in signage? That should be understood that if there is a location, in fact we were together in recent times and we were in Golden

Square, and I could not understand how the Ministry of Tourism could carry a walk about tourists and people dressed up real pretty and this same Ministry used to have signs of a fat woman sitting at a door somewhere in Nelson Street called Rachel Pringle. This is funny behaviour, a major contradiction, but nobody carries the walk-through Nelson Street.

Sir, the Honourable Member for the City did not get any benefits, not just promotion but no political benefits came to him. Nobody that was involved out there in the Square bought any beers from Nelson Street. They did not go out there. I try to encourage them to go to one of the places that I frequent, and you are very well aware.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: The Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker too, and so it is not any place that is unwholesome, but I am saying that we cannot, well everybody is upset because this is an old trade and whatever happens out there lets the trade continue. I am supportive of the trade continuing but I'm saying that tourism itself I do not know exactly where that location is. It is called one of the first hotels that we have had in Barbados. We have an industry which is very dependent on tourism. Nobody does not know where the building is. It is where? Canary Lane well Canary Lane. The Honourable Member for the City will take me to Canary Lane. We need to know that where that building was and if it is so significant to the hotel industry that is a building that should be identified even the same BTII should be able to put some money in the improvement, if it needs improving or if they came to the conclusion that it needs to remain the same form that it is in. If you have any activities or promotion of what is a Food and Rum Festival well, you cannot want any more food and rum than across Nelson Street. Food, rum, and anything else you like you can get out there and the tourist industry. They should have had some kind of programme to include the people in Nelson Street in that programme. A march through Bridgetown or whatever or a walk-through Bridgetown or 'leffin' out something wrong with the thinking patterns. I really believe with those I promise you Sir, I am going to babble one or two ideas spontaneously out of my head, and I hope that by making those few points I am serious too. It cannot be that costly for us to, even to have paintings of outstanding Barbadians at different strategic across the City. It cannot be that costly. Something wrong and furthermore than that the world that we had before we cannot even see at no time. A painting of Clement Payne. The Late Errol Walton Barrow, Grantley Adams. Nobody, you cannot see anything like that in the City of Bridgetown as though people reclaim the whole space for themselves again and that cannot happen in a Republic. If you go to Havana now you are going to see Che' Guevara up on the wall and you will see Fidel Castro's pictures on the walls that is Republic. If you go in

the United States of America, you see pictures of Presidents even artistes. Nothing in the City of Bridgetown and that is why it is a dead city. It is almost tantamount to one of the Burial Grounds. Nothing is happening in Bridgetown, and I think that we need to take immediate steps, the agencies that are responsible need to take immediate steps to bring back some life to the City of Bridgetown and those National Heroes that we know should be featured at strategic points. Another time Sir, we will have a discussion on this place called Queen's Park where they have the Daphne Joseph Hackett Theatre and those things. We will have a discussion on Queen's Park. I believe it is really one we need to have just now but we would be polite enough to defer such a discussion so I just want to make that brief contribution to the discussion on what I consider to be an effort to transform the physical environment and the aesthetics of The City of Bridgetown, and I hope that this is one of the initial steps in 2022 of making this effort to create a new urban Barbados.

Asides.

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

His Honour N.G.H. ROWE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise in support of this Resolution, I am cognisant of our role in these turbulent times, and as elected Members of this Honourable House, when dealing with these many challenges I am reminded of the late Right Honourable Owen Seymour Arthur when he said, "We must face it and fix it." I am sure that he would approve of the fact that we have faced these many challenges. In the spirit of our American neighbours from the United States Embassy, in their baseball parlance we have "stepped up to the plate". Sir, whether it is National Insurance Scheme reform we are not concerned with whose fault it was because Government is continuous, so we are not concerned with who dropped the ball or who did not have the foresight before us. We will face it and fix it, and we will make sure that Barbadians' nest eggs are protected, are safe and secure, and that when they retire, they will have a living on which they can rely.

Sir, whether that challenge is climate change, I must remark that the Honourable Prime Minister has been spectacular and has a lot of foresight on this issue where she has led the charge, putting Barbados on the map even before we came into Government in 2018, highlighting that as Small Island Developing States, we are the least offenders, but we suffer the most of the ravages of climate change. All it takes is to go down on the West Coast and see the beach erosion, and it is a serious problem. We have led the charge, little Bim, and it is something we can be proud of. Earlier, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South and the Honourable Member for Christ

Church West Central, who coined his Ministry the "ministry of turquoise", have highlighted that creative instruments like the debt-for-nature swap will allow us to raise the necessary capital without further burdening Barbadians economically. This is very innovative, and I want to applaud those Honourable Ministers for leading that charge in whatever capacity they did. Whether it be COVID-19, a freak storm, a hurricane, or ash fall, we have stepped up to that proverbial plate. We took calamities and turned them into opportunities for our citizens, and every Honourable Member in here benefited by allowing their constituents to go and work on the ash programme, to become a COVID-19 monitor, to do debushing, whatever it is. I believe it adds up to about 3 000 jobs.

Equally, I must applaud the Ministry led by the Honourable Member for St. James Central for emphasising financial literacy through the Literacy Bureau. That is very important as well because a lot of these young people, a lot in my constituency, never had a job before, and this will give them the opportunity to understand how they can manage their money to be able to make meaningful contributions to society. I also want to comment about jobs and investment that will be introduced to this country. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West touched on this: Two billion dollars-plus in investment that will be brought into this country via projects that are on the horizon, which will give more opportunities to our young people. However, in order to capitalise on these opportunities, they have to be trained.

Mr. Speaker, through the National Training Initiative and the Construction Gateway Initiative, which was spearheaded by the Honourable Minister of Education, will allow us to train our young people to be able to capitalise on these opportunities, Sir. This is very important to take us forward. It is all well and good to say that we have X amount of billion dollars in investment coming into the country, but we must be able to economically enfranchise our constituents and allow them to come along for the ride, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East has so eloquently said. We cannot leave anyone behind. Sir, I want to further commend the Ministry of Education on the upcoming reforms that it is about to engage in, but I also want to comment on something the Honourable Prime Minister had said before about every Barbadian having to learn a second language. I agree 100 per cent with that, but I would like to add to that.

Every young Barbadian must learn the language of coding. That is the new frontier so I would like to recommend to the Ministry that from as early as first form in secondary school -- it could even be primary school, as the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown has recommended, and I totally agree -- we should have an introduction to computer languages. I can remember when I went over to university in Florida and my first

introduction to a language was when I was 19 years old, and that was C++. I was so clueless, and a lot of my colleagues who had come up in the American system were already fluent in Fortran and all of those other languages. Now it is so pertinent for us to be able to have our young people know a computer language so that they can take part in the global revolution that has already started with software development and application design. This is a way in which we can earn more foreign exchange, Sir.

I want to commend the Ministry again because they have already started introducing robotics - it started with the Honourable Member for St. Michael Southeast -- and expanding on robotics in our schools. Sir, that is a start, but it would be remiss of me as the Chairman of the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated not to comment on this Resolution which we are about to approve here today in this Honourable House. This is but one project out of many that will contribute to the renewal of The City of Bridgetown. I am very proud to be a part of this urban development project, because along with Golden Square Freedom Park, Constitution River Phase three, and all of the upcoming perspective projects at Forte Willoughby, and we talked about the Hyatt earlier are going to bring many jobs to the City of Bridgetown. I know that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown must be ecstatic because all of this will add up to about 6 000 jobs. This will not only be shared by constituents in the City of Bridgetown....

Asides.

Mr. C. G. L. GIBBS: St. Michael West, Christ Church West, St. Philip West, everybody is going to get a piece, that is a fact. Then, add that to the jobs that we have coming from Sam Lord's Castle as well, which is 340 jobs as the Honourable Member from Christ Church West said earlier, and 1, 000 jobs at the end. Simple math will tell you that is 7 000 jobs right there, but everybody is going to get a piece. I want to add, and the Honourable Member from St. Philip South will be very pleased to hear, that we will make sure that Sam Lord's Castle buys a lot of local produce from farmers in the east. As a Government, I want to add that we have also been blessing the east with the roadworks that are coming up. We are not forgetting or ignoring the east, we are going to face these challenges head on. We are going to face it and fix it.

However, I would like to reflect on comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, and as we engage in these urban projects, we have to take everybody along with us. We cannot be spending billions of dollars on these projects and forget about the people, the constituents in the City of Bridgetown, St. Michael Central, St. Michael South, St. Michael West, St. Michael West Central, we have to make sure that housing solutions are given to them.

As I reflect on the rising crime that is taking place in our constituencies, it is really hitting me hard. Honestly, there are certain things that we need to do to start erasing the scourge of crime, and housing is one, because you could imagine, as we walk through the constituencies, and we see the conditions that our constituents live in. We see ten people living in a one-bedroom urban house. We see these sorts of situations and we can understand that the frustrations must boil over and those frustrations must relate to crime. Hence, if we fix the housing situation, which I know we will by the edict that the Prime Minister has laid down that we aspire to construct, not just with the Government of Barbados, but through partnerships as well with the private sector, 10 000 houses in five years. I look forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote a study that was done by the University of California Irvine, which proves that crime is inextricably linked to housing. When we have affordable, dignified housing for our people, it has been shown that those areas that had benefited from those housing solutions have seen safer spaces for the children, grandchildren, grandmothers, and grandfathers. In addition to that, as the Honourable Prime Minister has said time and time again, that you stop people from renting, you give them a piece of the rock, what are they going to do, they could leverage those assets to be able to make further investments into the economy.

Sir, in closing, again, I support this Resolution wholeheartedly and I look forward to the many housing solutions in addition to these other investments that will help to uplift our people. I thank you.

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

Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not delay the House unduly, but I believe that I would not have wanted this opportunity to pass me without complimenting the work of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. Indeed, the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. was the vision of the Late Right Honourable Owen Arthur, member for St. Peter, who in his vision and quest to develop Barbados, sought to have a number of what I refer to as investment and developmental vehicles in order to propel urban development and investment in tourism and related projects. Certainly, that vision continues to go on and in an executing division Mr. Speaker, you can see the wonderful transformation that is taking place in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West now has the distinction of sharing the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. I must compliment him and his Board and the staff for the outstanding work that they continue to do in transforming national development.

Indeed Mr. Speaker, the redevelopment plans in St. Michael South Central of the areas starting from James A. Tudor Roundabout, coming all the way down to Halls Road to in front of Queens Park unto to the Constitutional River and the Speightstown initiative that the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. would have had a hand in as well, not only lend to the national beautification of this landscape, but what it also did is to assist with flood mitigation in Barbados. We have had, especially in the area of Headley's Land and so on, a history of severe flooding that would have compromised individuals and businesses in that area.

However, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Chairman of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., the Honourable Member for St. Michael West touched upon this point, but I want to stress that I hope that in the fullest of time that resources will also be allocated to other areas in St. Michael, such as St. Michael West Central that often times suffer from severe flooding in certain areas, and where there is significant scope for investment. As we all know Mr. Speaker, if you have water coming down stream it will impact not only your constituency of St. Michael Central, it will impact my St. Michael West Central constituency and also the other areas, especially when it comes ravishing through St. Michael West and St. Michael North West.

Sir, I believe that as we build out the investment portfolio of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. due consideration has to be given to other areas within Barbados and I make a special plea on behalf of the residents of St. Michael West Central for which the Honourable Member for St. Michael West is familiar.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make the point that there is significant, and I will stress the point, significant scope for development in the corridor leading from what you will call the Hilton area, going north all the way down to the Harbour Road. There is significant investment in that area. There are several vacant lots. There are some buildings that could do with significant enhancement and refurbishment. However, properties that I do not believe are utilising the full economic potential of the properties that they have idle or those that are in dire need of refurbishment. I believe that the time has come when we not only have to look at the Harbour Road but the Princess Alice Highway.

This is a prime area for additional development. We have a situation where you have the Bridgetown Port. There are several cruise passengers when they come to Barbados would often time take the journey either by foot or by vehicle and that stretch of area where vacant lots exists or buildings are in dire need of refurbishment could be refurbished to take advantage of additional economic activity as we continue to build out employment for people in Barbados, and opportunities for the tourist when they visit Barbados to spend some money on the island to boost

our tourism earnings. We have to reach that point as soon as possible to ensure that we have the appropriate commercial activity blending in with the fish market, for example.

I see no good reason why we cannot have additional restaurants or food stalls to allow people to sample our local flying fish and other delicacies that are absolutely needed and necessary, be it when they are walking back to the cruise ship or travelling from the cruise ship. You can even incorporate tours into the Bridgetown fish market. Mr. Speaker, I recall many years ago, maybe almost 20 years, that I had the opportunity to visit Seattle on vacation. In Seattle, there was something called Pikes Fish market. If you saw what the vendors and other professionals in the fish market would do with fish, the experience alone was a tourist attraction.

In Barbados, we have some of the finest fish vendors that you can probably ever have across the world. We have very clean and sanitary facilities in the Bridgetown market and other markets across Barbados. I do not understand why, Mr. Speaker, we cannot infuse that as part of the additional development for Bridgetown in that corridor. Mr. Speaker, for many years those assets remained in that corridor, as I have referred to it, lingering. The time has come where I believe we have to make a significant investment. However, I would leave it to the Chairman and the Board because I believe they have other plans.

However, we have to come back to the point where we have to make the best use of our economic land and land spaces. The time has come when we could use the best economic value of land spaces to help us create more employment in Barbados. With redevelopment, Mr. Speaker, there are going to be jobs and expanded economic activity. You will get some more VAT in the Treasury so we can build out and do the things that we need to do. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the property owners on that stretch to start thinking about opportunities where they can expand and develop, rather than leaving assets to linger at the rate at which they are lingering. Also, I believe that the time has come when we have to look at what we may refer to as the old or former Immigration Building.

It is a wonderful view, Mr. Speaker. It is an unobstructed view. In some places, Sir, when you go, you might say that you are going to a resort. If you go down to San Diego or some other places on what you call the West Coast of America, you will see some wonderful hotel sites there. You will see some wonderful dining opportunities on that site. You can do whatever you want to with it. Whatever activity or investment is necessary, but that location is right for additional development in Bridgetown, Mr. Speaker. When you realise what the BLP did when they were in office in terms of the boardwalk on the careenage and the opportunity that exists there for may be

additional dining and bar activity to inspire again increased investment, jobs, and further economic activity in that general area.

Mr. Speaker, when you drive around in the same area by the carenage and go around the corner by the car park, I drove there recently and had to opportunity to see in that corner plywood sheets on the ground floor of the building in historic Bridgetown. I could imagine where the former Representative for Bridgetown would have perhaps asked, "What are we doing with Bridgetown?" Let me make it clear that not the Government of Barbados because the property is not owned by the Government. It is clearly owned by private sector interests. I am calling on the private sector interests who may have plans to build it out, but the plywood sheets have been there for far too long, Mr. Speaker. I would like them, Sir, to really start making amends there. I would like them to make it a bit more beautiful, exciting, and tasteful to the eye, for especially those who live here and who come to visit us.

You know from time to time, we have people who come to Barbados as visitors and who will obviously take in some sightseeing and we would not want to see a beautiful boardwalk on a wonderful carenage with all the catamarans, deep sea fishing and a nice car park to see a building with plywood sheets. I believe an investment entity owns it and they should find the resources to do it to help us continually to build out Bridgetown, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I also believe that the BTII has a wonderful opportunity to continue to play the role of developer in Barbados. I say that because I know they have some people in Barbados who believe that Government cannot do anything right. There are some people who believe that perhaps Government should not have the appetite for development.

You hear them, Mr. Speaker, because they do not want the Government to develop it. They would prefer to develop it to have the returns, but I believe that the BTII has a significant role to play as developer not only to excite investment opportunities, especially for projects that ought to be redeveloped but also to flip them when necessary. The BTII as a vision was set up not only to facilitate transformation but to step into where the Government believed at the time there was a void in tourism-related investment. The mandate was expanded to deal with urban Barbados and to renew it as we have heard today.

The time has come when we have to look at the investment vehicle for BTII. I am convinced, Sir, with a few changes that it can make a substantial or even greater contribution to Barbados if it had to adopt another form of vehicle. I am not going to go into details on that now, Mr. Speaker, but I really believe that it is a wonderful opportunity. I am not going to touch anything remotely connected to NIS today, but I also believe that there are

opportunities for partnerships. The NIS has a rich history. They have made successful transactions. I am not going to talk about it, Mr. Speaker, because I know there is a lot of propaganda and talk related to that institution. However, the time will come in here when there will be a debate. I served as a former Chairman of the NIS Board.

I know that like the BTII, the NIS continues to do a wonderful job in Barbados. I look forward to a debate when I will be able to sometimes clear up along with my colleagues some of the propaganda that appears to be out there, and that people would want to perpetuate in a small society about the NIS. I believe, Sir, that perhaps we can look at how we augment the BTII as an investment vehicle. Mr. Speaker, open it up for wider public participation so that people who like to invest in projects and I am talking about Barbadians, not institutions, who could invest in a similar vehicle like BTII and get some wonderful returns. When you look and see what they are doing at Sam Lord's Castle, they are building out significant infrastructure and the Government must never be afraid, Mr. Speaker. I come from the private sector, and I know it well. If somebody comes along and likes something better than you and they want to pay you multiple of earnings for it there is no harm, Mr. Speaker, because it is still here in Barbados and that is how you earn money and other Barbadian-based investment firms continue to do the same in Barbados and outside of Barbados. We have, perhaps, to look at that. It is something we can look at down the road, but I really want to close by asking those property owners who own property on that stretch to see what they can do. Undertake their feasibility plans, maybe they have already done so, to see how best they can leverage and utilise their assets. Starting from what I called the corridor by the Hilton Head, you may call it Bay Street, going north all the way down to the Harbour Road, which constitutes a wonderful investment opportunity for the country. If the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.) is so capitalised and can afford to take on additional projects because I understand the physical space we are in, it would even have greater opportunity for Barbadians to own institutions iconic as they could be in the future. Mr. Speaker, I intended not to speak this long, but I felt I had to join the debate because the residents of St. Michael West Central would have wanted me to join this debate, not only to represent their interests and to ask for any future assistance that potentially could come their way, but also they would have wanted me to speak on this topic because if it could create additional employment opportunities, those residents and constituents in St. Michael West Central would also have an opportunity to have a job in new enterprises and grow, like anybody else, Mr. Speaker, and own a piece of this rock as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First, let me thank all Honourable Members who spoke in the debate. I honestly did not think that such a simple Resolution would have garnered so many people to want to contribute, but it shows how important our capital city is. It might be in The City of Bridgetown, but it belongs to all of Barbados, and I think that is the important point. All of us have constituents who want to benefit from housing, all of us have constituents who come here to transact business, all of us have a vested interest in our capital city and that is the important point that comes over. I also want to remind Honourable Members that this is now a one off. This is a part of a programme that when I first was at the Ministry of Housing and Lands we started because we did not start with the Treasury Building. We started a rejuvenation programme. That rejuvenation programme included the Registration Building which is moving along quite nicely; the Courts next door to the Registration Building which is moving along quite nicely; the gatehouse which is completed and occupied; the warehouse next to the gate at the old Barbados Water Authority (B.W.A.), which is about to go out to tender; the three-storey Barbados Water Authority (B.W.A.) building which is also about to go out to tender and be rejuvenated; Reef Road which is behind Pelican which is now being assessed for tenders; the inaudible Building in Magazine Lane which is going to be finished in another two months; the planning Department at the Garrison, which has started and will finish in six months' time; the Welfare Department, which is finished and Her Majesty's Prison, 'Glendairy', as well which we also vested. We have been on a very persistent and consistent programme to rejuvenate all of these buildings that were disused and are being put back into productive use and this is but one, one in the centre of Bridgetown.

I have heard all Honourable Members and I appreciate that we have lots of work to do. Queen's Park is another one. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West, I guess he is suggesting whether it should be name Queen's Park or some other name, I do not know, but we are looking to make that a cultural centre for Bridgetown as well where we have artists and residents, where we have people doing paintings, people who can come and play music, people who can come and learn how to play music, all sorts of things right there in what is currently called Queen's Park.

This is a part, and yes, we see it coming in pieces, but it is the part of a complete vision that the Prime Minister and the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (B.T.I.) and the people at Planning and Development have

to be able to rejuvenate all of the buildings, bring The City back and bring Barbados into the 21st century as a strong and proud nation that we are as a people and that is the whole basis of this. That is why money spent on the people of Barbados is always money well spent.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will ask that this Resolution do now pass.

???: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 10 – RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

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

Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move the passing of this Resolution and Order Number 10 of the Order Paper which deals with the proclamation under Section 28(1) of the Emergency Management Act, CAP. 160(A).

Mr. Speaker, as we are well aware, this proclamation will expire on September 22, 2022, and the attendant directors and orders will also expire on September 22, 2022. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware and Honourable Members are also aware, the COVID-19 pandemic in Barbados is on a downward trajectory. Indeed, we have moved from a positivity rate of 41 per cent going back to July when up to yesterday we only had a 15 per cent positivity rate. Overall, the positivity rate has been declining. If you compare this week to the previous week, we would have declined by some 43 per cent.

Over the last few months, a number of changes were made to the directives. Those changes included no testing at our ports of entry for incoming unvaccinated travellers. We also reduced the period of isolation from 10 days to seven days and we also removed the three feet physical distancing mandate in the last directive that we published. The Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mr. Speaker, continues our commitment to reviewing not only local information, regional information, and international evidence as we make the appropriate recommendations in respect of how to relax restrictions while at the same time paying attention to public health evidence and that is absolutely critical. I really want to commend Barbadians for staying the course with us, for their patience, Mr. Speaker, for their understanding, for their empathy during what we described as uncertain times in respect of this COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a very long and difficult road for families, for businesses and even Government, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to ask the Barbadian population

for their continued support in the interest of their health, Mr. Speaker, and in advancing our economic fortunes.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health, and Wellness continues to be very concerned with the death toll, particularly those 70 years and older. We are seeing, obviously the numbers are on a daily basis when the numbers are published and the death rate in that particular target group, Mr. Speaker, remains a source of concern. I might also want to add condolences to the families of those deceased persons as well. It is always a difficult thing when you lose a relative, but particularly those in the 70-year category, and 70-year plus, that group, we have recognised that they have been obvious concern there. Now, it is the responsibility of every citizen to help each citizen go through this process and obviously as we have been saying personal behaviour goes a long way in us managing the Covid pandemic. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated the proclamation of the Emergency Management Act will expire on December 22nd. As I indicated, the Covid 19 pandemic has improved over the last four weeks. The metrics used to monitor the Pandemic those metrics are trending downward, but we must be careful not to erode any of the gains we have made thus far. We have, as Members would know, the emergence of new variants. We confirmed some time ago that we have the Ba5 variant in Barbados and thanks to the CARFA and sending information down to the lab as often as we do we get a report on the variants and obviously certain detections because we have to continue to maintain our surveillance systems in order to ensure we continue to manage what we have before us in Covid. We in the Ministry of Health and Wellness are committed to the gradual relaxation of all protocols and we are committed to that but after internal and external consultations and on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer. As we know the Chief Medical Officer is the Public Health Specialist, the Public Health expert, and the support of the emergency operations committee the CMO has recommended we continue with the proclamation and the attendant directives as well as the orders for another three months. His advice was given. His advice was taken and we are going to do so for the first three months of this first instance commencing September 23rd and that is what the Resolution sets out to do where it says that the proclamation was extended and has not been revoked and that we are proposing that the proclamation is extended until December 21st, 2022 notwithstanding that we will have a period defined as contained in the Resolution at paragraph 2 for a period not exceeding six months as the House of Assembly may determine by a Resolution. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated the Chief Medical Officer is the Public Health expert. He has made certain recommendations and therefore in keeping with his advice we are proposing that this extension be facilitated. Now, obviously in facilitating the extension of the Emergency Management Act there are certain things that will be facilitated. One has to do with the indoor mask wearing

which we have to maintain at this point in time until further notice. The other issue with respect to the visitations of Health Care Facilities both private and public as I indicated we have had in the seventy plus year old group a number of elderly persons who have succumbed to complications and therefore we have to manage that because we have to care about the elderly in this society. We also have to manage the visitations to the Health Care Institutions because often times you have outbreaks in these institutions and even though we are very good at managing the outbreaks to reduce significant death. We have a duty to protect the elderly in this population and in particular we have a duty to protect those elderly people who are living in our elderly care institutions. The extension of the Emergency Management Act will also continue to facilitate the work of the Covid 19 Monitoring Unit. That unit has made the country proud. It has been able to help us in the ministry manage the spread or reduce the spread of Covid within the community and therefore that unit will continue to be operationalised. The other issues are that we have had, because of our memoranda of understanding with the Government of Cuba we have some Cuban professionals who are here, who work tirelessly in the Covid 19 response and continue to do so, and it is critical that we retain those persons, those medical professionals from Cuba and to continue with those medical professionals from Cuba. The Emergency Management Act would allow such.

I know that they are individuals would be asking why we are extending the Emergency Management Act, but we have a duty to do so, and I believed that I would have addressed the issue especially with the care of the elderly, The Covid Monitoring Unit and also those who are here. Mr. Speaker, I continue to give this Honourable Chamber the assurance that as we review the evidence, like I say we have to benchmark it not only locally we have to look at what is happening in the region and what is happening internationally. I give the House the assurance that appropriate changes will be made. Recommendations are made by the Emergency operations Committee. The CMO will sit down, assess the facts, and therefore make a further determination. There are several people who speak on Covid. They do not have a Public Health background and it is one thing for a person without a Public Health background to challenge people in Public Health, but I can tell you that this country is a blessed country. It is blessed with excellent human resources and those persons who are trained in Public Health have helped us to steady this ship during Covid and they have also helped us to steady this ship outside of Covid whenever we are faced with emerging Public Health emergencies. You know the world has changed and today it could be Covid tomorrow it could be something else and we are faced with emerging health emergencies and we have to manage them and the fact that we have trained Public Health specialists who can make the appropriate recommendations and advise to the Ministry, to the Minister and obviously to those who matter in the

decision making train I remain confident in their abilities to advise us and I have no doubt that we will continue to be very well served by those professionals. Mr. Speaker, I believe I would have answered or set out to anticipate questions that the public may have had. Obviously, I remain available to answer any further questions on this particular matter, but we really have to ensure that all the gains that we have made thus far that we do not throw them away and that is the basis for the proposed extension for the Emergency Management Act and therefore not to detain the Chamber unduly, I would beg therefore that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, as you are aware this Resolution can only be passed by a majority and therefore a vote has to be put to all Honourable Members present.

A division was called for. The bell was rung. The House divide was as follows:

AYES

Hon. Miss Santia J. O. BRADSHAW

Hon. Adrian R. FORDE

Dr. the Hon. William F. DUGUID

Hon. Ms. C. Sandra V. HUSBANDS

Hon. Wilfred A. ABRAHAMS

Hon. Indar A. WEIR

Hon. Charles McD. GRIFFITH

Hon. Colin E. JORDAN

Hon. Kirk D. M. HUMPHREY

Hon. Ryan R. STRAUGHN

Hon. G. P. Ian GOODING-EDGHILL

His Honour Neil G. H. ROWE

Ms. Marsha K.-A. CADDLE

Hon. Miss Kay S. MCCONNEY

Hon. Davidson I. ISHMAEL

Mr. Corey A. LANE

Mr. Trevor A. PRESCOD

Mr. Edmund G. HINKSON

Miss Cynthia Y. FORDE

Mr. Peter R. PHILLIPS

Ms. Toni N. S-A. MOORE

Mr. Christopher D. L. GIBBS

Mr. SPEAKER: Twenty-two Members voted Aye; no Members voted against; there were no abstentions. The majority voted in favour and therefore this Resolution stands passed. Leader of Government business.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss Santia J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This brings us to the end of Government business for the day. I therefore beg that this Honourable House be adjourned until Tuesday, September 27, 2022, at 10 a.m.

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ISHMAEL, Hon. D. I.

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PRESCOD, Mr. T. A.

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STRAUGHN, Hon. R. R.

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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. Opening. Mr. Speaker's welcome to the members of the Youth Parliament (about 170 words) is run into the line recording prayers ('Prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood. Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session...') rather than set as a separate speech. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 7, heading. The Order heading appears garbled in the source: it begins 'RESOLUTION TO PROVE IN ACCORDANCE', repeats 'THAT PARLIAMENT APPROVE (A) THE COUNTER-GUARANTEE', and reads 'THE NEXT SAVINGS' and 'CONSERVATION AND SUBSIBILITY COMMITMENT AGREEMENT'. The Order No. 8 heading reads 'APPROVED IN ACCORDANCE SECTION 2' and 'FIRST CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL BANK'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 9, Ms. M. K-A. Caddle. After an aside, Ms. Caddle's speech resumes mid-sentence ('.....to bring this project to fruition'), suggesting words were not captured. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 9, Mr. C. G. L. Gibbs. Mr. Gibbs's speech begins mid-sentence ('St. Michael West, Christ Church West, St. Philip West, everybody is going to get a piece'), directly after Mr. N. G. H. Rowe's speech and with no call from the Chair; the opening appears to be missing. His label reads 'Mr. C. G. L. GIBBS', while the PRESENT list and division list give 'C. D. L. GIBBS' and 'Christopher D. L. GIBBS'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Speech labels, Mr. C. A. Lane. The Member for The City of Bridgetown is labelled 'Mr. C. A. LANE' and listed in the division as 'Corey A. LANE', but the PRESENT list gives 'Mr. C. A. LAYNE'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 9, seconder. The seconder of the Resolution is shown as '??? : I beg to second that, Sir.' The speaker is not identified in the source. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 9, Dr. the Hon. W. F. Duguid. Several paragraphs of the Minister's opening speech break

mid-sentence (for example 'situated just across the road from' / 'this Chamber', and 'give a Request' / 'for Proposal (RFP)'). Printed as in the source.

Q9. End of the report. The record ends with the Leader of Government Business moving the adjournment until Tuesday, September 27, 2022; no seconder or closing procedural sentence follows. Please confirm.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at the Parliament Buildings on Tuesday, 13th September, 2022 at 10.00 a.m., with Mr. Speaker, His Honour A. E. Holder, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood, and Mr. Speaker welcomed members of the Youth Parliament. The Minutes of 12th August, 2022 were confirmed, Hon. R. R. Straughn laid the Response to the Auditor General Report, 2021, and Standing Orders were suspended. The House stood for a minute's silence on the death of the former Queen.

Orders No. 7 and 8 were taken together: a Resolution under the Debt Conversion (Counter-Guarantee) Act, 2022-12 approving counter-guarantee agreements with the Inter-American Development Bank and The Nature Conservancy of up to approximately BDS\$300 million, with a conservation funding agreement and environmental commitments; and a Resolution under the Special Loans Act approving borrowing of about \$150 million each from First Caribbean International Bank (Barbados) Limited and Credit Suisse to buy back more expensive existing debt and use the savings for marine conservation. Mr. Straughn recalled that the Government had inherited public debt of \$17 billion, 176 per cent of G.D.P. The IDB would now guarantee US\$100 million and TNC US\$50 million, producing savings estimated at US\$30 million to US\$40 million over 15 years, paid to a fund on which the Government, The Nature Conservancy and the University of the West Indies would be represented. The Credit Suisse term loan of US\$150 million had a 42-month grace period and 24 semiannual payments of US\$3.125 million, maturing in September 2037.

Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey said the Government had 'over-performed' in managing the economy, and Hon. A. R. Forde called the swap a 'Bajan' deal that would not cost Barbadians a cent. The debate was postponed, notice was given of Resolutions on the Treasury Building and the Public Health Emergency, and the Sitting was suspended until 2.20 p.m. Afterwards Mr. C. A. Lane spoke in support, and Mr. Straughn replied, thanking the officers

involved; at Mr. Speaker's reminder he moved Order No. 7 separately, and both Resolutions were agreed to.

Under Order No. 9, Dr. the Hon. W. F. Duguid moved a Resolution under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act vesting the Treasury Building, Bridge Street, opened on 22nd November, 1967, in the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. for residential development. He said that a city dies if people do not live and shop in it, and that BTII would seek proposals to redevelop the building with commercial and cultural uses below, as part of plans from Needham's Point along Bay Street. Ms. M. K-A. Caddle, Mr. Lane, Mr. T. A. Prescod, His Honour N. G. H. Rowe,

Mr. C. G. L. Gibbs and Hon. G. P. I. Gooding-Edghill supported it, and the Resolution was agreed to.

Under Order No. 10, Mr. Gooding-Edghill moved the Resolution to extend the Public Health Emergency, whose proclamation would expire on 22nd September, 2022, noting changes to the directives such as ending testing of incoming unvaccinated travellers, and the Ministry's concern at deaths among those aged 70 and over. On a division the Resolution passed by 22 votes to none. Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw then moved the adjournment until Tuesday, 27th September, 2022 at 10.00 a.m.