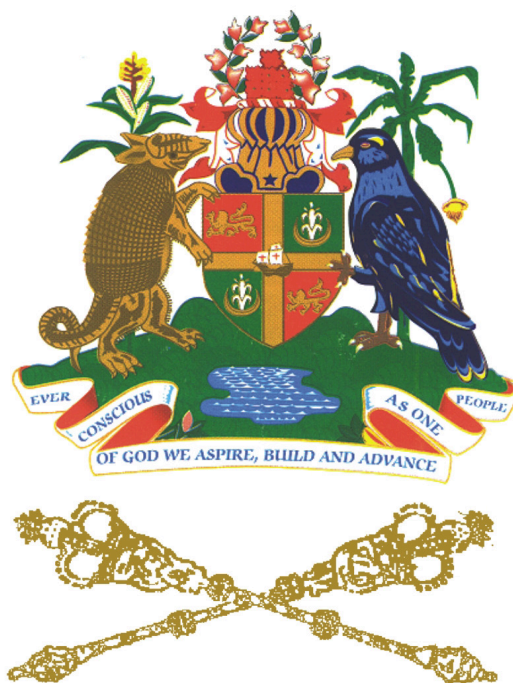


# **Most Gracious Speech To Both Houses of Parliament**



**By**  
**Her Excellency**  
*Dame Dr. Cécile La Grenade*  
**Governor-General**

**ON TUESDAY, THE TWENTY-SIXTH OF SEPTEMBER, 2023**

**2023 THRONE SPEECH**

***“Forward into 50: Reflecting on our Past,  
Solidifying our Future.”***

**Delivered to the Houses of Parliament**

**By**

**Her Excellency Dame Cécile La Grenade,  
Governor-General**

**on the Occasion of the Second Session of the  
Eleventh Parliament**

**Grenada Parliament Building  
Mt. Wheldale  
St. George**

**September 26, 2023**

**10:00 a.m.**

## **Introduction**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament,  
Good Morning.*

As we embark on this Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, my Government stands before you today with a great sense of honour and gratitude. Despite the challenges of the past year, our collective commitment to transform our beloved Nation – to build, together, a just nation in which every individual has an equal opportunity to realise his or her full potential – is bearing fruit. In just this short period, my Government has achieved many great successes, and has renewed hope among our cherished citizens of our beloved Nation. Undoubtedly, my Government has made remarkable progress in advancing its progressive and inclusive transformative agenda.

Today, as we stand on the cusp of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an independent Nation, we are energised and excited about the future, even in the face of global economic uncertainties. We remain confident that, together, we will continue to thrive and prosper as one people, one nation, under God.

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

As we approach five decades of independence, our theme for this Session of Parliament is, **“Forward into 50: Reflecting on our Past, Solidifying our Future.”**

This theme is rooted in our overarching theme for the Eleventh Parliament: “Transformative Development – Towards a Sustainable, Equitable, and Prosperous Grenada,” which, in and of itself, is deeply rooted in our “Vision 2035” – *Grenada, a resilient and prosperous nation, with a conscious and caring citizenry, promoting human dignity, and realising its full potential through sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress for all.*”

With God’s grace, we have been diligently working, side by side, to lay the foundation to commence the transformation to build a better Grenada for all. Our focus in this Session of Parliament is to continue building the foundation while consolidating these hard-earned achievements and redoubling our efforts in areas where progress has been slower.

## **Celebrating our Jubilee Anniversary**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

On February 7, 2024, our Nation will attain 50 years of independence. This is a defining achievement, in and of itself - a testament of the strength, resilience, and the unwavering spirit of our people. We will mark this historic milestone with a yearlong commemorative celebration of events, projects, programmatic and policy initiatives truly befitting of our golden jubilee, and which will be designed to have positive legacy impacts on future generations of Grenadians.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has already announced some of these initiatives, including

- i) The issuance of a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary independence commemorative E.C. \$50 note;
- ii) For the first time, the declaring of 19<sup>th</sup> October as a national public holiday in solemn recognition, reflection and appreciation of the tragic sacrifice and martyrdom of Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, his Cabinet colleagues and the citizens of Grenada who lost their lives on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1983;

- iii) For the first time, the naming and celebration of our national heroes;
- iv) The renaming of our national landmarks; and
- v) The introduction and teaching of Grenadian history in our schools; which began in the new school year.

More details of the events and projects will be provided by the National Organising Committee at the launch of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

## **Protecting Grenada's Patrimony**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker*

As we commemorate our 50th anniversary of independence it is paramount that we, as a nation, protect our patrimony, so that future generations of Grenadians can continue to benefit from the courage, hard work, resilience and success of our people.

The decision to sell, via freehold, lands on Grand Anse Beach and other strategic locations on the South Coast, which are prime lands for tourism development, to private interests, is clearly unpatriotic and deleterious to ensuring that those to whom those lands are sold, can be held accountable to

develop and engage in robust economic activity on such lands.

To this end, my Government has successfully negotiated and re-acquired the freehold interest in three of those sites: the site upon which the Grenada Radisson sits; the Kawana Bay site, and the site located immediately before the Umbrella's Restaurant. These sites shall only be transferred via leasehold, as a matter of policy, aimed at ensuring that the next generation of Grenadians have an opportunity to say how these sites can be utilised.

It is for this reason that my Government will swiftly move to introduce legislation in Parliament, within the last quarter of this year, to ensure that state or crown lands which are strategically located in our prime developmental and tourist areas, can only be transferred via lease and not by way of freehold sale.

## **Oil and Gas**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

As of today, we are yet to solve the mystery of Grenada's offshore oil and gas reserves. Very little records can be found

anywhere within the Government, and our technocrats within the Ministries and Departments have very little information on this matter. In essence, upon assuming office, my Government was not provided with any transition report or any files on Grenada's legal or contractual obligations or Grenada's progress in relation to its oil and gas reserves.

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

This situation is untenable and completely unacceptable and my Government is committed to doing all within its power to unearth the mystery of Grenada's oil and gas status. To this end, my Government has established a technical working group, chaired by a past Minister for Finance, Mr. Nazim V Burke and comprising of distinguished Grenadians, including Mr. Rodney George, Mr. Richard Duncan, Mr. Raymond Nurse, and the Office of the Attorney General represented by the Solicitor General to investigate and to do what it takes to demystify our oil and gas situation. The mandate of the technical working group is to fully assess Grenada's hydrocarbon potential and, if found to be commercially viable, devise a strategy and action plan to explore, develop and monetize it for the benefit of the citizens and the patrimony of the nation.



*Madame President, Mr. Speaker*

My Government's strategic priorities for this Session of Parliament are:

1. Citizen Safety and National Security
2. Education and Skills Development
3. Youth Empowerment
4. Health & Wellness
5. Agriculture Food, and Nutrition Security
6. Energy Transition and Environmental Sustainability
7. Foreign Policy and Trade
8. Restoring the Public Service integrity; Maintaining Industrial Peace
9. Housing & Community Development
10. Economic growth and Job creation
11. The Creative Industry
12. Physical and Digital Infrastructure
13. The Blue Economy

## **Citizen Safety and National Security**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

A safe, secure and peaceful Grenada is a fundamental pillar of our way of life and, without it, much of our transformational agenda will be brought to a screeching halt. My Government is committed to preserving our long-standing record as a low crime nation and one of the safest places in the Caribbean.

While not unique to Grenada, the recent increase in violent crimes, involving the use of firearms, is a major concern for each and every Grenadian, both at home and in the diaspora. As a peaceful and loving citizenry, we must do everything in our power to nip this trend in the bud.

In this regard, my Government has established and will convene a National Security Council, whose mandate will include to consult widely with Grenadians across all sectors to assist with the creation of a national security policy and strategy to improve and strengthen our national security architecture.

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

My Government will introduce CCTV cameras across public spaces and other vulnerable spots across Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, and the required legislation to ensure the use footage from the CCTV cameras can be used as evidence in Court Proceedings to successfully prosecute criminals. This proactive measure will help enhance surveillance, deter criminal activities, and promote a safer environment for all our citizens.

My Government will also move swiftly before the end of the year to amend the Firearms Act to provide for much stiffer penalties for persons convicted of possession, trading, or use of illegal firearms.

A number of important initiatives will be taken by my Government related to the RGPF.

We are committed to fostering a more inclusive and responsive approach to law enforcement. To this end, we will initiate a consultative process engaging various sectors of our society to solicit their valuable input on how policing

can better address their specific needs. This inclusive dialogue will enable us to develop a more effective and community-centered law enforcement strategy that reflects the concerns and priorities of our diverse citizenry.

Having recognised the importance of effective HR management and succession planning, my government will appoint a Human Resource Manager and a Planner for the RGPF. This historic and strategic decision is aimed at optimizing the efficient utilization of our human resource capital. These professionals will play a crucial role in ensuring that our officers are well-supported and that the RGPF can continue to evolve and excel in its mission.

Recognizing the challenges and trauma that members of the RGPF may encounter in the line of duty, my Government is fully committed to their well-being. We will establish access to counselling services to effectively address Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and offer comprehensive psychosocial support to our dedicated law enforcement personnel. This initiative aims to prioritize the mental health and resilience of our officers, ensuring they receive the care they deserve while continuing their vital work in protecting our communities.

We are dedicated to optimizing the operations of the RGPF by re-evaluating its structure and eliminating non-essential departments. Starting in 2024, we will transition the responsibilities of the licensing and port security departments to civilian personnel, enabling our police force to concentrate exclusively on their primary duties. This strategic move will optimize the RGPF's resources and enhance its ability to fulfil its core functions.

With respect to His Majesty Prisons, emphasis will be placed on infrastructure enhancement, enhancing rehabilitation efforts, and promoting self-sufficiency within the prison system.

## **Education and Skills Development**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

My Government reiterates its philosophy that our human resources are our most precious assets and the fundamental contributor to the social and economic development of our nation. Further, that education is a basic human right. My Government will therefore continue to prioritise education

and skills development as a fundamental basis for transforming our society and people.

In the past year, significant strides have been made in this regard, including:

- i) The removal of registration fees at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels, aimed at eliminating financial barriers to education.
- ii) Increased subventions to schools and other educational institutions to cover operational cost.
- iii) The launch of the Free Tuition Programme up to the tertiary level.
- iv) Curriculum development to include the teaching of Grenadian history in our schools, Spanish in primary schools, and the expansion of the teaching of Creative and Performing Arts.
- v) The approval of a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy and strategy to enhance TVET training and address skills mismatches in the job market.
- vi) A road map for delivering coding to students has been developed and a pilot project is currently underway.
- vii) The Healthy Start Nutrition Programme Strategy

has been developed, encompassing interventions in physical education and improved nutrition, through local, healthier foods.

To further transform the education landscape, my Government will prioritise the review and amendment of the Education Act to increase the school leaving age to 18, the implementation of the TVET Policy and Strategy, the Launch of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Reimbursement Programme, and Student Loan Scheme, and amendments to Early Childhood and Special Education Needs Policies, among other areas.

## **Youth Empowerment**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

Youth empowerment is a top priority of my Government, for many reasons, including the youthful nature of our population. We will therefore continue to place emphasis on creating a vibrant and empowered youth community that drives social, economic, and cultural progress in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

In the past year, significant progress has been made in advancing our youth empowerment agenda. These include:

Successful execution of four parish-level and two national Youth Parliaments, where 125 young people had the opportunity to debate on issues of national and regional importance.

The successful re-launch of the Caricom Youth Ambassadors Programme, which seeks to integrate the views of Caribbean youth towards a robust and inclusive Caribbean Community.

In Carriacou, the Progressive After School Experience (P.A.S.E) programme was launched; an initiative that aims to provide quality education and enrichment opportunities for children in the village of Windward, Carriacou.

The certification of over 100 participants as part of the MPower Programme, who completed various courses and skills training in Grenada and Carriacou is highly commendable.

The reintroduction of cricket competition amongst primary schools and the successful hosting of the Windward Islands School Games.



In this Session of Parliament, my Government will continue to emphasise transformative strategies for youth empowerment, including in the areas of youth engagement, education and skills development, digital literacy, culture and creative industries, employment, and entrepreneurship support.

## **Health and Wellness**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government reiterates its commitment to transforming our health care system as one of its top priorities, with the goal of making Grenada the health capital of the Eastern Caribbean.

Despite significant challenges confronting the sector, we have made substantial progress.

Key achievements in the past year include:

- i) The purchase of 83.9 acres of land in Calivigny, St. George, which will be the site for the construction and operation of Grenada's Climate smart, new Teaching Hospital Project.
- ii) The strengthening of human resource capacity through the hiring of additional health professionals and improving employment conditions.

- iii) The introduction of CT Scan services.
- iv) The commencement of Hemodialysis and peritoneal Dialysis services at the General Hospital.
- v) The commissioning of a new accident and emergency unit in November of 2022.
- vi) The refurbishment of five theatres at the General Hospital to international standards.
- vii) The completion of a new modern Pharmacy Department at the Phase 2 Building of the General Hospital.
- viii) The enhancement of primary health care through the launch of primary health care teams and the upgrading of several health centres and medical stations, including Hillsborough Smart Health Centre, Victoria Medical Station, the Princess Royal and Princess Alice Hospitals, and the Westerhall and Good Hope Medical Stations.
- ix) The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the McKinney Foundation, headed by its Director, Dr. Timothy Mc Kinney, a graduate of the St. George's University, to promote women's health and to provide free gynaecological and urological health care treatments and services to women in Grenada.

- x) The renegotiation and contractual engagement with the Joint Independent Provider Association (JIPA) for the implementation of the National Health Insurance Project.

These achievements underscore my Government's commitment in prioritising the health and wellness of our Nation. The focus for this Session of Parliament will be to further strengthen human resource capacity and primary health care systems and advance the new Hospital and the National Health Insurance Projects.

## **Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government's vision for the transformation of the agricultural sector focuses on enhancing food and nutrition security through increasing local food production and consumption, agro-processing, and other various initiatives.

Important advances have been made in this regard thus far.

My Government successfully mobilised \$27 million from the World Bank for our Food Security Enhancement Project, aimed at providing increased access to farm machinery and equipment, fertilizers, improved crop varieties, better and higher quality breeds of pigs, goats and sheep.

My Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with St. Vincent and the Grenadines to cooperate on agriculture and food security programs, including crop production, forestry, livestock, agro-processing, marine resources, and trade.

Over 60,000 plantlets were propagated for sale and distribution to our farming communities and in support of the spice replanting project.

In keeping with my Government's stated policy to invest in emerging sectors, a Commission on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation was established to work towards the decriminalization and legalization of cannabis and the establishment of a cannabis industry.

Our focus in this Session of Parliament will be on consolidating these gains, including:

Accelerating the implementation of the Food Security Enhancement Project to provide direct benefits to the farmers and fisherfolks and by extension our Nation. My Government will establish three animal breeding centres at Laura, St. David, Mirabeau, St. Andrew and Limlair, Carriacou. Additional cold storage facilities, commercial ice machines, and training in safety at sea, will be provided to our fisherfolk.

The implementation of the OECS Food and Agriculture Systems Transformation (FAST) Strategy to enhance food production, self-reliance, and economic development.

The rollout of the Integrated Landscape Approaches and Investments in Sustainable Land Management project on the Grand Bras Estate.

The continued implementation of the Youth in Agriculture Project.

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government reiterates its commitment to successfully reforming the Marketing National and Importing Board

(MNIB) to support farmers and the agriculture and agro-processing sector, and the new entity is expected to come on stream no later than the first quarter of 2024.

## **Energy Transition, Environmental Sustainability**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

Through strategic alliances with local, regional, and international partners, my Government is diligently pursuing its agenda to protect and preserve our pristine environment, including combatting climate change, and promoting renewable energy.

Highlights of major achievements in the past year and strategic priorities in this new Session of Parliament include:

**Climate-Resilient Training:** In October 2023, key stakeholders will receive training in the Caribbean Climate Online Risk and Adaptation Tool (CCORAL), enabling climate-resilient decision-making.

**Accreditation to Climate Funds:** My Government is actively working on accreditation to the Adaptation Fund

and the Green Climate Fund to secure funding for climate initiatives.

**Resource Mobilization:** The Government, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, has completed a Resource Mobilization Strategy. Significant funding has already been mobilised or is under negotiations, including for the Climate Smart Infrastructure Project from the Saudi Development Fund. Moreover, several concept notes have been approved, paving the way for full project proposals to secure funding.

**Mainstreaming Climate Resilience:** Efforts are underway to mainstream climate resilience across sectors like education and fisheries, with a focus on combating coastal erosion and sea-level rise.

**Renewable Energy Transition:** Grenada is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and is promoting green cooling and renewable energy solutions. The Limlair Solar PV Project, in Carriacou, the Grenada Geothermal Energy Development Project, in St. John and St. Patrick and the proposed Energy Efficiency Project in Public Buildings are significant steps in this direction.

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government reaffirms its commitment to reform the electricity sector as quintessential to the transformation of our Nation. This will require a tremendous effort given the gravity and complexity of the current situation. That notwithstanding, satisfactory progress is being made in this area.

We have developed a National Energy Policy to determine Grenada's optimal energy mix and have completed an assessment of GRENLEC's generation capacity. We are now working feverishly to mobilise resources to expand renewable energy generation.

My Government is pleased to report that we are at an advanced stage of negotiations in securing funding for a mega solar PV system at the Maurice Bishop International Airport, which will contribute significantly to reducing our reliance on diesel, the modernising of our electric grid and the building of resilience in the electricity sector.

My Government recognises the need to tackle the modernisation and reform of the transport sector and we have



undertaken a comprehensive study of the sector with grant support from the Caribbean Development Bank. The results of this important study will pave the way for our interventions in the sector aimed at reducing our transportation problems and greening the sector. Meanwhile, my Government will continue to incentivise the adoption of hybrid and electric vehicles through concessions and other forms of support.

**Waste Management:** The Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority is investing in recycling facilities, color-coded waste collection, and partnerships to tackle waste-related challenges. Initiatives for recycling organic waste and landfill improvements are also progressing.

## **Foreign Policy and Trade**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government is committed to extensive international engagement as a vital tool in Grenada's foreign policy. Our aim is to promote inclusive, sustainable economic growth and raise Grenada's profile on the global stage.

My Government will establish an effective cadre of diplomatic envoys to aid in economic recovery and investment

generation, thereby broadening Grenada's diplomatic, trade, and investment options.

So far, my Government has successfully appointed and trained a new group of diplomats and expanded staffing at Missions worldwide. We have appointed 5 sectoral ambassadors and are in the process of establishing diplomatic relations with several African countries.

Diaspora outreach is another key component, with plans to leverage the Grenadian diaspora's potential contributions to innovation, entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and investment. The establishment of the Grenada Diaspora Advisory Council and the appointment of an Ambassador for Diaspora Affairs underscore my government's commitment to nurturing and enhancing connections with Grenadians abroad.

Trade is an area of critical importance for my Government as the nation seeks to augment production in the marine and fishing, and agro processing sectors. Therefore, beneficial trade relationships that provide opportunities for growth, and creation of sustainable jobs, while simultaneously reducing our food import bill will be explored, with a view to expanding and diversifying our export base.

## **Restoring the Public Service integrity; Maintaining Industrial Peace**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

Since assuming office in June of last year, my Government has taken decisive steps to restore the integrity of the public service aimed at rebuilding trust between the Government and the public. We inherited a demoralised public service caused by years of victimisation, low job satisfaction, poor working conditions, a complex maze of ad hoc HR policies, among other factors.

Added to that, the industrial climate was poisoned by mistrust further compounding the negative impact of low productivity and inadequate quality of service delivery.

In the past 15 months, my Government has undertaken the following to boost the morale of the public service and the industrial peace in the Country more broadly. These include:

- The honouring of the Constitution and the ruling of the High Court to pay retroactive pensions to our deserving public sector retirees to the tune of \$75.1 million.

- The payment of \$1.2 Million in docked salaries to teachers and other public officers.
- The settlement of outstanding salary increases to workers at the T.A Marryshow Community College in the sum of \$10.6 Million.
- The agreement to pay 13 percent in salary increases to all Government employees for the period 2023 – 2025.
- The agreement on fringe benefits for various categories of public sector workers.
- The temporary relocation of staff into rented premises and the introduction of flexible and remote work to address health and safety problems arising out of the poor state of Government buildings.
- The rollout of twice monthly payment of personal emoluments to public sector workers, including statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises.
- The collective review of the minimum wage in the public and private sector with a view to increasing the minimum wage. This review is almost complete, and the new wages are expected to take effect from January 2024.

In addition, my Government has recently approved the Public Service Regularisation Strategic Framework and Accompanying Guidelines for the Appointment on a Definitive Basis in the Public Service to guide the regularisation of Government workers, including contract workers and IMANIs. The first phase of the regularisation will commence by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

Furthermore, my Government has addressed critical HR needs in the public sector to strengthen institutions and improve service delivery to our citizens.

My Government will continue to prioritise the reform of the public sector to restore public service integrity, improve labour relations, and treasure our most valued resource.

Key initiatives will include:

- Implementation of a robust capacity building strategy
- Accelerating the implementation of the regularisation strategy
- Active engagement with citizens through town halls, media briefings, and other means of communications.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review and reform of our current HR policies.

# **Housing, Community Development, and social protection**

## ***Housing***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

My Government has completed a comprehensive assessment of our housing needs. The results are not surprising to my Government, which points to a significant deficit in both the quantity and quality of our housing stock across the length and breadth of our Nation. Too many of our citizens still rely on pit latrines and do not have access to water, and in-house bathroom and toilet facilities.

As a caring and transformative Government, our priorities are clear on the need to improve the housing and basic living conditions for our citizens. This is a major priority for my Government. In this regard, my Government will pursue a multifaceted strategy to address the critical issues related to housing, including:

- (a) The launch of Project 500. Project 500 is my Government's flagship commitment to building 500 Grenadian styled Homes across Grenada, in our

first term. My Government has already appointed the Project 500 Steering Committee and Management Unit to plan and implement Project 500.

- (b) The Committee is tasked with ensuring Project 500 utilises new materials and applied technology; ozone friendly building materials, innovative building techniques, common sewer system, rainwater harvesting, solar energy, smart agriculture and designated model farming areas, promoting all-inclusive community development; homeowners associations, common laundry & shopping facilities, multi-purpose indoor sporting and cultural facilities and outdoor recreational parks.
- (c) The deployment of the Water Access and Sanitation in Homes or WASH program, a signature partnership between Government, NGOs, private businesses, donors, community groups, and volunteers. It aims to provide households facing financial challenges in Grenada with access to clean, running water and adequate sanitation facilities. My Government's aim through the WASH program is to eliminate the practice of open defecation and pit latrines use, as

far as possible, by the end of 2027; to ensure that all homes have access to indoor water and bathrooms thereby improving living conditions and promoting the overall well-being of all citizens in Grenada, Carriacou, and Petit Martinique.

- (d) The pilot for the WASH program will be launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in the community of Belle Isle, St. David where 52 homes will be targeted over the next 12 weeks to be outfitted with indoor water and bathrooms. This pilot will be replicated in communities across all of Grenada during my Government's first term in office.

## ***Community Development***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

In the area of community development, the focus will be on building knowledge-driven and people-centred communities. Key initiatives will include sports clubs, self-help activities, beautification projects, care groups, skills training, anti-drug and alcohol programmes, and parenting programmes.



## **Support for Education Enhancement and Development (SEED) Programme**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

The Support for Education Empowerment and Development (SEED) programme is being refined through beneficiary reassessment and a new assessment tool. Furthermore, my Government will commence the issuance of SEED benefit cards for more efficient and dignified benefit distribution.

### ***National Insurance Scheme***

My Government is actively pursuing strategies to improve the social security landscape with the National Insurance Scheme being at the centre. In this context, several critical legislative changes have been made and are in the pipeline to enhance our social security system, including, introducing a permanent unemployment insurance benefit programme, improving the self-employed persons regulations, and enhancing the national insurance claims and payments system.

## ***Gender Equality***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker*

My Government reaffirms its commitment to national gender equality. Key Initiatives will include increased support for Cedars Home, a coordinated response to gender-based violence, training, and various projects to promote gender equality. My Government aims to continue mainstreaming gender and will establish a Men's Bureau to advance gender equality and social transformation. Added to that, my Government will pursue the full rollout of gender-responsive budgeting in the 2024 Budget cognisant of the differential impacts of policies and initiatives on men, women and children.

## **Economic Growth and Job Creation**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government has been credited for managing the domestic economy well, with the economy on track to expand by more than 5 percent this year and other macroeconomic indicators showing signs of strengthening. Undoubtedly, our policies have been growth-friendly and inclusive,

demonstrating our strong commitment to fostering growth, job creation, and shielding the population from negative externalities.

From the removal of VAT on some nineteen essential foods and other basic necessities, to the temporary removal of the petrol tax, to the provision of an electricity subsidy for our less fortunate, these measures are testament to the responsiveness of my Government to the challenges facing our citizens.

My Government's interventions in various sectors, have served to boost economic activity and employment.

Looking ahead, the macroeconomic outlook is favourable, despite an uncertain global economic environment. Through our policies and interventions in existing and emerging sectors, such as the Cannabis industry and the creative economy, my Government is confident that economic growth will be robust and sustainable jobs will be created, especially for our young people who are entering the job market.

Some of the key highlights of major drivers of economic growth and job creation include:

## ***Tourism***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

The rebound of the tourism sector is a driving force behind our recent economic expansion and job creation. My Government will continue to prioritise the transformation of our tourism sector by creating more opportunities, investment, training and support to the industry.

We believe that our policies have boosted investor confidence and will redound to the benefit of our nation and people.

My Government has resolved several issues in the Sector created by the last Administration.

Permit me to mention one such major issue.

- 1) The Kawana Bay Arbitration Dispute was clearly a lose-lose situation, regardless of who prevailed at the International Centre for Investment Dispute (ICSID). Madame President, Mr. Speaker, you would recall that upon assuming office Grenada faced an arbitration

claim in excess of USD \$100 Million from the developers of the Kawana Bay Project; the site was closed and abandoned with no work taking place. My Government, within its first fifteen months in office, has been able to settle the matter amicably by the acquisition of the site, and developer's withdrawal and discontinuance of the arbitration claim against Grenada, at a cost of USD \$22 Million, thus saving Grenada tens of millions of dollars in potential damages should we have lost the arbitration dispute. The amicable settlement of the dispute has paved the way for my Government to accelerate the development of one of our most picturesque locations on the Grand Anse Beach. In this regard, my Government is pleased to announce that we are in advanced negotiations with a new developer to lease the site for the construction of a 5-star hotel, and we anticipate that actual construction shall commence in the latter part of 2024.

## ***Creative Economy***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

Recognising the significant potential of the creative sector to economic growth and transformation, job creation, and

youth empowerment, my Government is actively pursuing a deliberate strategy to build out this new and exciting economic stream.

To this end, my Government has already begun to engage and will continue to harness the creative energies of our creative citizens. In May 2023, after launching the office of creative affairs, we hosted the very first Creative Economy Symposium to promote the Creative economy as a transformative vehicle for sustainable development. This symposium sought to leverage the importance of Creative Economy by raising awareness about its potential and challenges, exchanging ideas and experiences, and inspiring synergies and collaborations.

The symposium has allowed my Government to launch the work in mapping the sector and developing the national cultural and creative industry policy and strategy. Additionally, our local creatives are now able to receive and enjoy 100% duty free concessions on imported gear and or equipment.

Before the end of 2023, my Government will also establish and launch the official Film Commission and a Cultural and Creative Industries Development Fund.

Most worthy of mention, the office of Creative Affairs has recently collaborated with the Ministry of Education and the T.A. Marrayshow Community College to offer specialised courses in Entertainment Law and Introduction to Entrepreneurship for Creative Industries.

In this Session of Parliament, my Government will continue its strategic investment in this sector.

### ***MSMEs***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

A thriving MSME (Micro, Small and Medium sized Enterprises) sector is the backbone of our nation's economy, contributing to economic activity, jobs, and innovation.

When my Government assumed Office, we inherited a poorly implemented COVID-19 Economic Support Programme. My Government moved quickly to reimagine the CESS Programme focusing on providing targeted financial support to MSMEs in all sectors but particularly, in the agriculture and fishing sector, positively impacting hundreds of beneficiaries.

Added to that, my Government extended the MSMEs concession regime, which remains in effect up to this day, targeting new MSME start-ups and the expansion of existing ones.

My Government will continue to prioritise support to MSMEs to create the enabling environment wherein these enterprises can play their part in the transformative development of our Nation. Support to MSMEs will include financial, access to markets, incentives and entrepreneurship training and handholding support.

### ***Physical Infrastructure***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

A robust physical infrastructure is a necessary condition for economic transformation. Adequate and efficient infrastructure supports job creation and productivity, facilitates trade and business activities, and improves other sectors, such as education, healthcare and the environment.

Regrettably, our infrastructure development has not kept pace with the evolving needs of our Nation. Our roads and



bridges are inadequate and poorly maintained; some of our state buildings are in a state of disrepair; our physical development has been haphazard. Fortunately, my Government is committed to construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of critical physical infrastructure, through public-private partnerships, to address the physical development deficit facing our Nation, while simultaneously stimulating economic activities and creating hundreds of jobs.

Some of the major strategic physical infrastructure projects include:

- i) The World Bank-supported Grenada Resilience Infrastructure Project, of which a key component is the reconstruction of the Baltazar Bridge in St. Andrew.
- ii) The rebuilding of the Cliff to Woodlands Road and the widening of the Woodlands Roundabout.
- iii) Addressing flooding problems in South St. George and Grenville areas.
- iv) Completing the Molinere Landslip Project.
- v) The systematic rehabilitation and renewal of State buildings.

## ***Digital Infrastructure***

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the development of a robust ICT and Digital Economy to keep Grenada abreast with the rest of the region, and indeed the world, in the conduct and ease of doing business.

To this end, significant progress has already been made in advancing this agenda, including expanding broadband access, strengthening data protection, implementing programmes to bridge the digital divide, including the *JUMP* Programme, which targets underserved communities and children, enhancing digital literacy, and providing training for digital job opportunities, including in areas such as coding and multimedia.

Looking ahead, my Government will continue to invest heavily in building a robust digital economy focusing on data protection and cybersecurity, education and training, digital inclusion, e-Government, and job creation.

Some specific interventions include:

- (i) The rollout of the initial phase of the new tax system, (GTAX), in the first quarter of 2024, focusing on Value Added Tax (VAT), Personal Income Tax (PAYE), and Corporate Income Tax (CIT) instalments. Registered taxpayers for these categories of taxes will be able to conveniently file and pay their taxes through a web-based platform, eliminating the need for physical visits, thereby enhancing the taxpayer experience.
- (ii) Continuing to work with our internet service providers to establish a network of Free Wireless Access Points in every community, school, government office, tourism site and recreational park.
- (iii) The expansion of education and training in coding and other critical IT skills.
- (iv) The digitisation of our passport and immigration services, to include online payment for services and the introduction of online Embarkment and Disembarkment (E/D) cards at the (Maurice Bishop International Airport (MBIA)).

## **Blue Economy**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

My Government has long recognised the tremendous potential of the blue economy to broaden, diversify and generate sustainable economic growth for Grenada. The blue economy encompasses a vast array of interconnected and mutually reinforcing industries, including fisheries, shipping and marine tourism, among others.

My Government reaffirms its unwavering commitment to harness the blue economy, including to position our Nation as a processing centre for fish exports destined to key international markets. Moreover, we will continue to explore potential opportunities in areas such as aquaculture, waste disposal, marine biotechnology, ocean renewable energy, coral farming, sustainable fisheries, bioprospecting, and marine eco-tourism, among others.

## **Carriacou and Petite Martinique**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker,*

My Government reiterates its commitment to transform our sister isles into vibrant and thriving economic centres,

including by tapping into their unique positioning to create unique advancements in the fishing and marine industries.

As a Government, we can boast of notable achievements in advancing our economic and social agenda on Carriacou and Petite Martinique in just under 15 months. These include:

1. Completion of preparatory works for a smart mini complex to house the Ministry to enhance service delivery.
2. Customer service training in collaboration with the Grenada Tourism Authority.
3. Human resource training in emergency communication, community emergency response, and information management.
4. Upgrades and reconstruction of fisheries and agriculture infrastructure, including work on the Windward Fish Market, the Belair Nursery Building, and the Limlair Livestock Station Building.
5. Restoration of veterinary services and increased agricultural support to farmers.
6. Infrastructure development, including road improvements and construction of new roads, including work

on the main roadway to the Princess Royal Hospital.

7. Enhancements in youth, sports, culture, and community development, including upgrading of the Hillsborough Tennis Court and the construction of a turf cricket pitch in Petite Martinique.
8. Social development initiatives, including housing repairs and medical assistance.

For 2024, the strategic priorities for the continued transformation of Carriacou and Petite Martinique include:

1. Commencement of construction works on the Smart Ministerial Complex.
2. Continuation of staff regularization and training.
3. Construction of a commuters building and jetty in Hillsborough to facilitate the movement of people to and from Carriacou.
4. Ongoing infrastructure development, especially the Belair main road and Petite Martinique enhancement project.
5. Focus on agriculture, including fish market completion, jetty construction, and livestock management.
6. Review and reestablishment of the Marine Protected Area management.

7. Youth skills development programs and structured housing support mechanisms.
8. Construction of a sporting and cultural centre and tennis court.
9. Repairs and construction of perimeter protections for playing fields and community development projects.

## **Legislative Agenda**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

Finally, allow me to touch on the legislative agenda for this Session of Parliament.

Of necessity, my Government will pursue an ambitious legislative agenda to support our Nation's transformative development. In the past 15 months, we have taken to the Parliament several pieces of critical legislation, including Amendments to the National Insurance Act to inter alia, introduce a permanent unemployment insurance programme to strengthen our social security system; the Disaster Management Act to enhance disaster and climate resilience; regulations on electricity generation, expansion,

planning and competitive procurement to support a greener and low carbon economy, to name a few. My Government wishes to place on record its commendation to the Attorney General and her staff for their tremendous work in advancing our legislative agenda.

The priorities for this Session of Parliament will include: The Energy Efficiency Act, The Fiscal Resilience Act, the Labour Code (Employment Act & Labour Code (Amendment) Bill, the Mental Health Bill, the Film Commission Bill, the Freedom of Information Bill, the Firearms Act, and the Crowns Land Act, to name a few.

## **Conclusion**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker.*

To whom much is given, much is expected. The people of Grenada have given us the strong mandate to transform Grenada. We have embraced this mandate wholeheartedly and have made remarkable progress in a very short period.

By working together, with diligence and unwavering resolve, we can realise a better Grenada for all.



In this context, my Government reaffirms its theme for this session of Parliament as: **Forward into 50: Reflecting on our Past; Solidifying our Future.**

*Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament.*

In closing, I wish to draw our attention both individually and as a Nation to the inspiring words contained in Philippians 4:13:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Let us rise to the challenge before us and seize the opportunities that lie ahead for a better future.

It is therefore my distinct pleasure to declare the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament open.

Thank you and may God continue to bless us all.