

BELIZE

No. 24/1/12

SENATE

Monday, 30th March 2015

10:10 A.M.

Pursuant to the direction of Mr. President, in writing, dated 27th March 2015, the Senate met in the National Assembly Chamber in Belmopan on Monday, 30th March 2015, at 10:10 A.M.

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Members Present:

Senator, the Honourable Marco Pech – President
Senator, the Honourable Godwin Hulse – Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality
Senator, the Honourable Juliet Thimbriel – Vice President
Senator, the Honourable Joy Grant – Minister of Energy, Science and Technology and Public Utilities
Senator, the Honourable Charles Gibson – Minister of Public Service and Elections and Boundaries
Senator, the Honourable Lisel Alamilla – Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development
Senator, the Honourable Gerardo Sosa
Senator, the Honourable Lisa Shoman
Senator, the Honourable Anthony Sylvestre, Jr.
Senator, the Honourable Patrick Andrews
Senator, the Honourable Markhelm Lizarraga
Senator, the Honourable Rev. Fr. Noel Leslie
Senator, the Honourable Ray Davis

MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair.*

PRAYERS *read by Mr. President.*

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, by letter dated March 27, 2015, Cabinet's recommendation has been signified to the following: General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015; General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015; Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015; Write-Off (No. 1) Motion, 2015; Write-Off (No. 2) Motion, 2015; The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Rehabilitation of Hummingbird Highway Project Loan Motion, 2015; Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) – Belize Integral Security Program Loan Motion, 2015; Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited Loan Motion, 2015; and Official Charities Fund Motion, 2015.

BILLS BROUGHT FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Pleasant good morning Mr. President and colleagues. Mr. President, I rise to take charge of the following Bills:

1. General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015;
2. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015;
and
3. Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015.

Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order No. 49 (1), I move that the Bills be taken through all their stages forthwith.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bills be taken through all their stages forthwith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

PAPERS

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to lay on the Table Sessional Papers No. 157/1/12 - Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2015/2016; No. 158/1/12 - Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015; No. 159/1/12 - Financial Statements for the Years Ended December 31, 2013, and 2012, an Actuarial Review of the Social Security Scheme – 2014; No. 160/1/12 - Central Bank of Belize Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2015; and No. 161/1/12 - Report of the Auditor General for the year April 2011 to March 2012.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, those Papers are ordered to lie on the Table.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE SENATE

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that, at its rising today, the Senate adjourn to a date to be fixed by the President.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that, at its rising today, the Senate adjourn to a date to be fixed by the President.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

I MOTIONS

1. **Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Instrument on the Establishment of the Small Island Developing States Dock (SIDS DOCK) Motion, 2015.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that - WHEREAS, the Instrument on the Establishment of the Small Island Developing States DOCK (SIDS DOCK) (hereinafter referred to as “the Statute”) was signed on 1 September 2014;

AND WHEREAS, the objective of the Statute is to establish the SIDS DOCK as a center of excellence and advocacy for the development of renewable energy technology for SIDS;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize is desirous of ratifying the Statute pursuant to Article XVII(1) of the Statute;

AND WHEREAS, section 61(A)(2)(a) of the Belize Constitution as amended by the Belize Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act (No. 39 of 2001) provides that the Senate shall authorize the ratification of any treaty by the Government of Belize;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Statute, a full text of which is hereto annexed.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

2. **Write-Off (No. 1) Motion, 2015.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that - WHEREAS, on 3rd April 2007, Government of Belize vehicle license plate BZB-1472 attached to the Ministry of Health was involved in a traffic accident and sustained extensive damages;

AND WHEREAS, the Police investigation found the driver to be at fault, however, no charges were brought against him and the Solicitor General advised

that it would not be prudent to surcharge as the limitation period had elapsed; as a result the Accounting Officer made recommendation for the write-off of this loss;

AND WHEREAS, the Accountant General, the Auditor General and the Financial Secretary are in support of the write-off;

AND WHEREAS, the total cost of repairs borne by the Government of Belize is \$14,647.21;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves the write-off of \$14,647.21 as a loss to the Government of Belize.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves the write-off of \$14,647.21 as a loss to the Government of Belize.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

3. Write-Off (No. 2) Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that - WHEREAS, on 26th February 2013, Government of Belize vehicle license plate BZB-0214 attached to the Police Department was involved in a traffic accident where Police Officer O. Gabourel accidentally lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a building; the officer died on the spot;

AND WHEREAS, the vehicle was valued at \$30,000.00 at the time of the accident; the Accounting Officer made recommendation for the write-off of this loss;

AND WHEREAS, the Accountant General, the Auditor General and the Financial Secretary are in support of the write-off;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves the write-off of \$30,000.00 as a loss to the Government of Belize.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves the write-off of \$30,000.00 as a loss to the Government of Belize.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

4. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Rehabilitation of Hummingbird Highway Project Loan Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that - WHEREAS, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (hereinafter referred to as "the Kuwait Fund") provides support to Arab and other developing countries by providing concessionary financing and technical assistance for implementation of key development projects and programmes;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize has requested assistance from the Kuwait Fund in the financing of the Rehabilitation of the Hummingbird Highway Project (hereinafter referred to as “the Project”);

AND WHEREAS, this Project comprises of the Rehabilitation of the Hummingbird Highway with of a total length of 55 miles, consisting of two lanes, a width of about 23 feet and shoulders of about 5 feet on each side, and includes improved drainage, new pavement layers, and the replacement of several single lane bridges with double width ones, as well as, safety provisions and new signage on the Highway;

AND WHEREAS, the total cost of the Project is estimated at Seventy-five point one million (BZ\$75.1 million) Belize Dollars;

AND WHEREAS, the Fund has approved an offer of a Loan in the amount of Four Million (4.0 million) Kuwait Dinars equivalent to approximately US\$13.5 Million to the Government of Belize to assist in the financing of this Project;

AND WHEREAS, the approved funding will be used to finance: 40% of the amount needed for the civil works and 100% of the amount needed for the Technical Assistance and Institutional Support required under the Project;

AND WHEREAS, it is expected that the OFID Fund will make a loan of US\$12.0 million to the GOB to cover a further 32% of the total project cost and that the GOB will cover the remaining 28% of the project costs through counterpart resources;

AND WHEREAS, the terms and conditions of the Kuwait Fund Loan Offer are as follows:

Lender:	The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development;
Loan Principal Amount:	Kuwait Dinars 4.0 million (or approximately US\$13.5 million);
Disbursement Schedule:	Withdrawals shall be made from time to time up to December 31, 2018;
Loan Term:	Twenty –four (24) years in total including Grace Period;
Grace Period:	Four (4) years from the Date of the Loan Agreement;
Repayment Period:	Repayment in forty (40) semi-annual installments commencing July 15, 2018;
Purpose:	To rehabilitate 55 miles of the Hummingbird Highway, to reduce travel times, and vehicle operating and road maintenance costs;
Rate of Interest:	At a rate of two percent (2.0%) per annum on the principal amount withdrawn and

outstanding and payable semi-annually on January 15, and July 15, in each year;

Service Charge: At a rate of one half of one percent (1/2%) per annum on the principal amount of the Loan withdrawn and outstanding payable semi-annually on January 15, and July 15, in each year;

AND WHEREAS, under the provisions of section 7 of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act 2005, the Government of Belize is required to obtain the prior authorization of the National Assembly, by way of a Resolution, for such a borrowing;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the loan proceeds would significantly contribute to the economic and social development of Southern Belize by improving the condition of the Hummingbird Highway, and addressing the increasing demand for the transportation of goods and services in the area, thereby promoting trade and business, approves and confirms that the Government of Belize may enter into a Loan Agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development on the term and conditions set out above, and further authorizes the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Loan Agreement and all other documents associated therewith.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, Mr. President, and colleagues. Mr. President, today as we look at our budget I will be highlighting where perhaps we have not been maximizing the use of our dollar, especially our loan dollars, where we continue to transform public assets, infrastructure; I believe and we believe primarily because of gross neglect. This highway, Mr. President, not too long ago, was one of the most beautiful drives in this country, beautiful highway.

We knew that there was going to be heavy traffic, we knew that there was going to be increased traffic after we found oil and the trucks started going on the road, I believe that we saw that we had to do a little resurfacing, put a surtax or an additional tax on the taxes on petroleum and we were suppose to be accumulating or charging these sums for the maintenance of these roads. But, Mr. President, as we know, there is no maintenance as in so many other places, as on so many other roads, and so many other streets, no maintenance or no timely maintenance was done to this highway. So, subsequently we saw the highway deteriorate, small holes became big holes and big holes became craters and pretty soon what was one of the most beautiful drives in the country became the typical hot hole ridden highway.

When I make my budget presentation I will be referring to this similar matter in many instances, Mr. President, but the point here is that if we had spent money in a timely fashion, if we had spent those tax revenues collected for the very purposes because we knew that the road was going to be destroyed by the heavy traffic and had we used those tax dollars to maintain that road, today we would not be in a situation where we are going to have to totally rebuild what was a beautiful highway not too long ago. I realize that now an effort is being made to widen the bridges, which is long overdue and we welcome that. I realize as well that they are putting shoulders where no shoulders existed on the road before. I realize that we acknowledge that, and that perhaps is welcome. But what is not welcomed is the fact now that we have to totally replace or put in new pavement layers because we allowed those pavement layers to deteriorate. That is not proper

management. So today, again, as to many other of the infrastructure loans that we have approved in this very Senate in recent years, we see monies going because we have not only unprecedented transformation in these roads, etcetera, but we have had unprecedented neglect. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR P. ANDREWS: Mr. President, I would like to give a few comments to this Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Rehabilitation for highway. Mr. President, while I agree with our colleague for the business community in all that he has said, I only want to draw out one principle that continues to be offensive to the thousands of Belizeans in this country. Our Prime Minister, in his opening remarks in this very House, mentioned that now because the municipalities of Dangriga and Punta Gorda has now become affiliated with the UDP that there would be immediate allocation of money to serve the Belizeans of the South. And while we welcome this infrastructural development, we must object to the continuous victimization of the Belizean people. I must continuously object to the use of public funds for political expediency that is continually used in this House, Mr. President. And while our Senator of Government Business might see no connection with my statement, again, these were from the words of our very Prime Minister, Leader for Government Business, that mentioned that now because Dangriga and the two towns in the south of our country has now voted UDP that they will now start to benefit from the public purse and from loans that are continued to being borrowed on behalf of all Belizeans.

And so, again, in closing in this area, Mr. President, we welcome infrastructural development across the width and breath of this country. What we object to is the continuous political victimization. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. SOSA: Mr. President, good morning, colleagues, good morning. I believe that what has been said, particularly on the opposite side of the Chamber here is improper. There is no victimization that had occurred in respect to those municipalities that were under the directorship of the People's United Party prior to the municipal elections. I think it was said over and over again, during the debate that the Government of Belize had been investing quite sums of money in the municipality of Orange Walk, Dangriga and Punta Gorda and that was prior to the March 4th municipal elections. The resounding victory of the United Democratic Party is just a message sent to the Government saying, "Hey, we are glad for what you have done, we have confidence in what you are doing and just like all the electorates across the nation, we all want more and we want to continue getting more from the United Democratic Party. That particularly is what the message sent in respect to what the Prime Minister said, that they are now going to get more. Thanks.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Thank you, Mr. President. I want to thank my colleague, Senator Sosa, for those comments because I was a little bit confused. You know, Mr. President, I was in Punta Gorda before the elections and I saw three major streets concreted, 14 streets upgraded in a manner that has never happened before, and I also saw some \$300,000 worth of drains put in to be able to drain that area that was always inundated for years and years under their Government. And so, I don't understand victimization in that sense, I could see that if Government said now, "Oh, now that you put in a UDP council, we will help you." The help happened before. (Applaud). I can assure you that the Kuwait Fund, this particular fund was not thought up since March 4; this was well underway, well negotiated to rehabilitate the Southern Highway and the north has

been the same. So across this country this development has taken place, this is no specific, unique, carved out little system. I listened to the House debate and I thought it was disingenuous of some of the colleagues to talk about areas that were not dealt with. I can assure you, Mr. President, and I'll do so in the budget debate that many of the villages and so that have been upgraded are villages that voted People's United Party as their village councilor and People's United Party Area Representative. So, Mr. President, on that note I move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the loan proceeds would significantly contribute to the economic and social development of Southern Belize by improving the condition of the Hummingbird Highway, and addressing the increasing demand for the transportation of goods and services in the area, thereby promoting trade and business, approves and confirms that the Government of Belize may enter into a Loan Agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development on the term and conditions set out above, and further authorizes the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Loan Agreement and all other documents associated therewith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

5. Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) – Belize Integral Security Program - Loan Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, WHEREAS, Belize being a member of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), is eligible for development assistance in the form of loans, grants and technical assistance from the Bank on such terms and conditions as may be agreed between Belize and the Bank from time to time;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize has requested assistance from CABEI to finance the Belize Integral Security Program, the overall objective of which is to support the betterment of the quality of life for Belizeans and support regional efforts for the prevention, reduction and combat of crime;

AND WHEREAS, the key goal of the Belize Integral Security Program is to strengthen citizen security by providing support to those institutions directly linked to maintaining National Security;

AND WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of CABEI has approved financing in the sum of US \$30,000,000;

AND WHEREAS, the approved CABEI financing will be used for investments in infrastructure and equipment for the Belize Defense Force, Belize Police Department, Belize Coast Guard and the National Forensic Sciences Service, including construction works, refurbishing and improvement of existing buildings as well as the supply of specialized technical equipment, surveillance and monitoring equipment, mobilization equipment, etc., for these institutions;

AND WHEREAS, the terms and conditions of the CABEI Loan Offer are as follows:

Lender:	The Central American Bank for Economic Integration;
Loan Principal Amount:	US \$30,00,000.00;
Disbursement Schedule:	Withdrawals shall be made from time to time beginning with the effective date of the loan and ending five years thereafter;
Loan Term:	Fifteen (15) years inclusive of a three year grace period, starting from date of first disbursement;
Repayment Period:	To be repaid in equal, semi-annual and consecutive installments in the amounts and dates determined by CABEI;
Purpose:	To strengthen citizen security in Belize by providing support and enhancing the capabilities to key institutions linked to maintaining National Security;
Rate of Interest:	6-month LIBOR + a 355 basis point spread set by CABEI;
Other Charges:	A Supervision and Administration Commission of one quarter of one percent (0.25%) on loan amount, to be paid once only, at the latest at the time of the first disbursement;

AND WHEREAS, under the provisions of section 7 of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act 2005, the Government of Belize is required to obtain the prior authorization of the National Assembly, by way of a Resolution, for such a borrowing;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honorable House, being satisfied that the Loan Proceeds would support the betterment of the quality of life for Belizeans and support regional efforts for the prevention, reduction and combat of crime, by up scaling Belize's National Security, approves and confirms that the Government of Belize may enter into a Loan Agreement with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration on the terms and conditions set out above, and further authorizes the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Loan Agreement and all other documents associated therewith.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, we have very few comments to say except that we are very happy to see that our security forces will be strengthened and that hopefully we will have, the spending from these investments will lead to a better quality of life for Belizeans and especially in the prevention or reduction of crime and hopefully the investments will seriously have an impact in the combating of crime.

Mr. President, however what I am not sure, and I ask, is when it states that national Forensic Sciences Services and specializes technical equipment, are we

finally getting our DNA lab, the much promised, much talked about DNA lab, we've been waiting for, for a long time? I am glad to hear that, Leader of Government Business. Thank you very much for that piece of information because that is something that we have, of course, been promised and saw the need for quite a while. But I remind the Honourable Leader of Government Business that if the DNA lab is going to be a part of the promises of this piece of legislation or these borrowings, Mr. President, we have yet to do some serious legislative homework because we have to pass quite a bit of laws for the acceptance, and I am sorry that some of colleagues who are in the law fields are not here to perhaps speak of one of them. But, I would think that we have quite a bit of legislative work to do before we could start using evidence from a DNA facility in Belize. So, I hope as a part of this exercise, Leader of Government Business, that as well is included the legislative work that would need to be put into place for the long awaited DNA lab to have the true effect that it can have in the solving of many of the unsolved crimes and the high rate of unsolved crimes that we have in our country.

Once again, Mr. President, we say it would have been nice for us to have seen the details of this project. I am sure if it was made for a good read and we wouldn't have to be asking the questions that we just asked. We continue to maintain that we really don't see the reason why we can't be privy to these project documents especially if our support is sought. And certainly, Mr. President, I think we have every right to see it because I know that these documents do exist and if the "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honorable House, being satisfied" is going to be continue to be used in every motion then I think that to satisfy us at the very least, we should be able to see the project documents. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I thank the Senator for supporting the Motion. As you know, we've provided in the past documents, this is quite regular but, of course, the Financial Secretary has also advised me that they are opened to all Senators at any time. I move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the Loan Proceeds would support the betterment of the quality of life for Belizeans and support regional efforts for the prevention, reduction and combat of crime, by up scaling Belize's National Security, approves and confirms that the Government of Belize may enter into a Loan Agreement with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration on the terms and conditions set out above, and further authorizes the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Loan Agreement and all other documents associated therewith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

6. Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited Loan Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I move that WHEREAS, in June 2005, the Republic of Venezuela and several Caribbean countries (including Belize) entered into an Energy Cooperation Agreement providing for the establishment of PETROCARIBE;

AND WHEREAS, in furtherance of the said Energy Cooperation Agreement, Venezuela and Belize entered into a bilateral Energy Cooperation Agreement in September 2005;

AND WHEREAS, pursuant to Article 1 of the said bilateral Energy Cooperation Agreement, Venezuela agreed to supply to Belize crude oil, refined products and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) up to four thousand barrels per day (4,000 bpd) on an annual basis, and designated Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA) to supply the said petroleum products subject to certain terms and conditions;

AND WHEREAS, to facilitate the supply of petroleum products, Belize and Venezuela established a joint venture company, ALBA Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited (APBEL), consisting of the Venezuelan state owned enterprise, PDV Caribe, and the Government of Belize (GOB) owned company, Belize Petroleum and Energy Limited (BPEL);

AND WHEREAS, APBEL has been jointly designated by Belize and Venezuela as the importing entity in Belize, for petroleum products purchased from PDVSA;

AND WHEREAS, under the terms of the said Agreements, the supplies of petroleum products to Belize would consist of two portions, namely, a cash portion and a financed portion, in the ratio of approximately fifty percent each;

AND WHEREAS, in September 2012, GOB and APBEL signed a revised loan agreement setting out the terms for lending the financed portion to the GOB;

AND WHEREAS, under the terms of the said Agreements, the cash portion is payable to PDVSA by APBEL within 90 days of importation and the financed portion is lent by APBEL to GOB on concessionary terms, payable over 25 years at one percent (1%) interest per annum;

AND WHEREAS, in November 2014, this Honourable House approved GOB borrowing from APBEL in the total sum of US \$114,307,356 covering the period September 2012 to August 2014;

AND WHEREAS, during the period September 2014 to February 2015, APBEL lent to the GOB a further sum of US \$28,776,243.39;

AND WHEREAS, the main terms and conditions of these further borrowings were as follows:

Repayment Term:	23 equal annual installments over 25 years, inclusive of two years grace period;
Rate of Interest:	1% per annum payable on the outstanding balance from time to time;

AND WHEREAS, the purpose of the borrowings was principally to finance capital projects, including the construction and rehabilitation of streets and road infrastructure countrywide; to finance the construction of sporting facilities; and to provide social and community assistance to the poor and the

socially marginalized in accordance with GOB's social and economic programmes;

AND WHEREAS, section 7(2) of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, 2005, provides that any agreement effecting borrowing by the Government over or above the amount of ten million dollars, (BZ \$10.0 million), or the aggregate amount of borrowings in any fiscal year exceeding the amount of ten million dollars, shall require a Resolution of the National Assembly authorizing such borrowing;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the loan proceeds from APBEL, on the terms and conditions set out above, would greatly assist the GOB in achieving the aforesaid purposes, confirms and validates the borrowing by the GOB from APBEL of the total sum of US\$28,776,243.39 during the period September 2014 to February 2015.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I remember not too long ago we sat or stood in this House and debated the legality or illegality of the way this House approved sums that had been used prior from Petrocaribe. I remember when I did my homework, I clearly saw that it was a liability. I thought it was a loan and I remember being specifically chastised for not knowing better because I should know better that this was not a loan, it was nothing more than suppliers credit. Well, I looked throughout this Bill and in section 3(1) it says, "the Government of Belize to borrow money" it doesn't say fuel, it says, "to borrow money without prior authorization of the National Assembly and to enter and to enter into a loan agreement." So we are finally admitting now that the law we passed then was not in fact correcting what we said it was to correct and now we are coming clean and we are saying, "Look, we need permission to borrow and we need permission to enter into a loan agreement by virtue of passing this new law." We are, in fact, admitting but, Mr. President, we are concerned as well because this money that is being borrowed is now to be kept in a special account at the Central bank of Belize and it says, Mr. President, "may be withdrawn from time to time as the need arises."

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I think he is debating the Bill, we are passing a Motion with a specific amount.

MR. PRESIDENT: Yes, Senator, please stick to the content of the Motion.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Mr. President, it is clear that this Bill, if passed, will have the effect of removing from public scrutiny the amount of money borrowed, the way it is spent, the amount spent, and perhaps even the scrutiny of accounting of how the money is spent. This Bill, Mr. President,...

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): With all due respect, we are not doing the Bill, we are doing a Motion for Petrocaribe, the Bill will come up at subsequent.

MR. PRESIDENT: That's what I said, and Senator, you must stick to the content of the Motion.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Okay, Mr. President, then I will wait for such time.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Yes, Mr. President, we are here on the Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited Loan Motion, 2015. Mr. President, let me first start by tendering my apologies to you and my colleagues for being late this morning. I was in the Supreme Court and could not change the date so I am here a little late but I am here.

MR. PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: And it seems that I have come just in time because I specifically wanted to speak to what is probably the last loan Motion we will ever see in this Honourable Chamber for Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited (APBEL), Why? I say this, Mr. President, because we will be discussing later today, and, I assume taking through all its stages, a Bill to make this kind of loan Motion no longer necessary, no longer urgent for the Government to bring for our attention and there will, probably, never be another one like this so let us look at it very carefully. The recitals in the loan Motion state that, WHEREAS, in June 2005, the Republic of Venezuela and several Caribbean countries (including Belize) entered into an Energy Cooperation Agreement providing for the establishment of PETROCARIBE; and that in furtherance of that Energy Cooperation Agreement, Venezuela and Belize entered into a bilateral Energy Cooperation Agreement in September 2005; and in fact, that agreement is, I believe, available online, can be seen, may be read.

AND WHEREAS, pursuant to Article 1 of that Agreement, Venezuela agreed to supply to Belize crude oil, refined products and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) up to four thousand barrels per day (4,000 bpd) on an annual basis, and designated what is known as PDVSA, Petroleos de Venezuela SA, to supply the said petroleum products subject to certain terms and conditions.

Now, among those certain terms and conditions was the agreement that there would be savings in buying this petroleum product because the Government of Belize would be required to pay upfront only a portion and that the other portion would be available for social programs that would uplift and better the lives of people in Belize. There is nobody in Belize, and I repeat, Mr. President, nobody that had any difficulty with that. As we all know, Mr. President, the rise in cost of fuel from that time to now has shown that the entry into this agreement was something that was important, necessary and was meant to ameliorate the high cost of procurement of fuel that small countries, particularly small Caribbean countries face. And this is so for many reasons, Mr. President, including the fact that we rarely purchase relatively speaking, so little fuel but our small economies are so impacted by the cost in fuel and then, of course, added to the fact that Government has to raise revenue by imposing taxes on that.

So, to facilitate the supply of petroleum products through this Petrocaribe agreement, Belize and Venezuela established a joint venture company which is known as Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited or APBEL which consists of PDV Caribe and the Government of Belize company, BPEL, which is Belize Petroleum and Energy Limited and APBEL is the body which is designated by Belize and Venezuela as being the importing entity for petroleum products purchase from PDVSA. And under the terms of the agreement, the supplies of petroleum products to Belize consist of two portions, as I've said before, a cash

portion and a finance portion and the ratio is 50% each. What does that mean? It means, Mr. President, that when we purchase gas from Venezuela we pay for half and the other half is put in a fund and it is that fund from which monies are borrowed in order for the social programs that should be Petrocaribe to be carried out. And in September of 2012, the Government of Belize and APBEL signed a revised loan agreement setting out the terms for lending the finance portion to GOB and under the terms of that agreement, the cash portion is payable to PDVSA by APBEL within 90 days of importation and the finance portion is lent by APBEL to GOB on concessionary terms payable over 25 years at 1%. Now, if you have to pay, the Government has to pay Venezuela, PDVSA, 50% within 90 days that tells you that they know how much, exactly how much they have to pay and exactly how much the finance portion will be well before the 90 days. And I need to make this point, Mr. President, because it means that there is absolute certainty as to how much that will be and therefore, there is absolutely no excuse for bringing a loan Motion like this, after the fact (Applause) and asking us on the basis of half a paragraph to, and I will read it, “confirm and validate the borrowing by the Government of Belize from APBEL of the total sum of US\$28 million during the period September 2014, to February 2015. September, October, November, December, January, February, 6 months, so do the math.

We have been spending at an average monthly rate on this supposed goals, we’ve been spending US\$28 million divided by 6. Do the math. And you tell us that the purpose of the borrowings was principally to finance capital projects including the construction and rehabilitation of streets and road infrastructure countrywide to finance the construction of sporting facilities and as an afterthought they stick it in there, to provide social and community assistance to the poor and socially marginalized in accordance with GOB social and economic programs. But there is this pesky animal you see, Mr. President, there is a pesky beast and that pesky animal is a law of this country that says that the Finance and Audit Reform Act calls on us and provides that any agreement effecting borrowing by the Government of Belize over \$10 million or in the aggregate amount in any fiscal year exceeding \$10 million shall require a resolution in the National Assembly authorizing such borrowing. (Applause) I want to remind us you know, Mr. President, that one of the architects of that very important law was my friend, my colleague, the Leader of Government Business. (Applause)

I want to remind us that in November of 2014, as this Loan Motion very kindly reminds us, there was a loan Motion passed in this House, in this Chamber, approving after the fact, a thing which we objected to, very loudly at the time, and we object again, the very total sum of US\$114 million for the period September 2012, to August 2014. And they did not learn their lesson then, (Applause) they just basically sat back and, again, after the fact, bring a loan Motion for the borrowing of this money and they are going to try and tell us that, “Well, really we have to come after the fact because we didn’t really know how much we would borrow when we borrowed it.” Let’s get one thing clear for the record, Mr. President. The minute you know how much cash you have to pay the Government of Venezuela that is the very minute you know how much you are going to borrow, so don’t tell me you don’t know. It is impossible to pay the Government of Venezuela 50% if you don’t know what is the other 50%. (Applause) Lets be very clear about that and you have 90 days to do it, so you are going to tell me, Mr. President, that ignoring the very law that took so much time, energy and dedication from each and every one of those persons who were concerned about reform, including the Leader of Government Business today, including all of the Legislators who sat in this Chamber and passed the Finance and Audit Reform Act in 2005. We’re just, as a Parliament, going to now ignore that and come after the inconvenient fact and spend or ask for us to approve, actually they are not even asking for us to approve, they are asking for us to go even further. I haven’t

seen this language, confirm and validate the borrowing. They are not asking us to approve the borrowing any longer, we are being asked to confirm and validate. I am not going to confirm and validate any wrongdoing against the law, man. (Applause) We can't support this. We cannot support this especially when there is a complete lack of, we haven't even been provided, Mr. President, with any copy, despite the repeated request. We have not been provided with the loan agreement that sets this up in 2012 in the first place. (Applause) So, how can I be satisfied that the loan proceeds from APBEL on the terms and conditions set out above, which includes the loan agreement, how can I say that I am satisfied that we are doing the right thing? How can we confirm and validate borrowing that has already occurred, when it was not brought to this Chamber, when the minute you know you have, because I want you all know, you don't borrow it when you draw it down, no. That money is borrowed from the minute you set aside a cash portion to pay to Venezuela within 90 days and a finance portion that you are going to keep and you take that finance portion and you park it wherever you are going to park it, in this case we are told, it's the Government who parks it in the Central Bank. So the minute the Government puts it in the Central Bank that is the borrowing that is occurring there. That's when you should be coming to the House and to the Senate to ask for approval of this borrowing, and you know how much it is. And I would argue, Mr. President, that there are good grounds for saying that until you don't pay Venezuela the whole amount until you send them their cash portion that that is when the borrowing occurs. So if we know that, before sending Venezuela the cash portion there is absolutely no reason why we can't be coming to the House and the Senate, because you can do it in one day or two days if you want. We have seen that before, Mr. President, and ask us to approve the borrowing. But no, here we are once again, the third occasion that I can recall, and I stand to be corrected if I'm wrong, that we have a loan Motion asking us to approve after the fact.

In complete contravention with the law, we are being asked now, the language has changed, to confirm and validate the borrowing, not to approve it because they know we can't approve it after the fact. We're being asked to confirm and validate the borrowing and I am not going to do that, Mr. President, and I will tell you why I will not do that. I will not do that on the basis of a paragraph when we have asked, time and again, give us the details as to how this is going to be spent, give us a breakdown, give us an assurance that there is somewhere accounting of specifically what amounts were spent on what. Tell me what are the capital projects that you are financing and how much. With this money, tell me what sporting facilities are going to be constructed and how much. And tell me where is the provision of social and community assistance to the poor and the socially marginalized in accordance with what Government's social and economic programs. (Applause) Otherwise, Mr. President, I cannot and I will not support this Loan Motion, (Applause) not because I don't think the people of Belize need assistance, not because I don't think that this money is something that the Government of Belize needs to borrow. I cannot and I will not approve it because, one, it is contrary to the law. And two, the Members of the Senate have a particular role to play as a check and a balance to make sure that not only the 't's' are crossed and the 'I's' are dotted but that we have full accountability for those funds that are being borrowed and time and again, time and again, and I have a good memory, Mr. President, I was here while the current Leader of Government Business in the previous Senate that I also sat with him, railed against the lack of detail in these Loan Motions. (Applause)

You might call it quixotic, Mr. President; maybe I am one of these lone voices calling out in the wilderness, maybe I am like Don Quijote tilting at a windmill. That may be the view of the cynical, Mr. President, if somebody or somebody do not stand up in this Honourable Chamber and say very loudly, "You

will not have my support because this is wrong. This is being done wrongly; it should have come to us for approval before.” Then none of us, Mr. President, will have the moral authority when we are challenged by history as to why we stood aside and just let this passed. (Applause) Look at it good though, Mr. President, look at this Loan Motion well because it is the last time we are likely to even see this as wrong as it is. This may be the last time you are ever going to see anything like this coming before this Chamber. I’m not quite sure what they are going to do with the monies that they borrowed in March but apparently, there is this word call “retrospective” that some people think is going to cover all kinds of nakedness. Mr. President, this Loan Motion does not enjoy the support of my bench. We do not, and when it is put to a vote, Mr. President, I claim a division. I want people to have to vote on this on the record. Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: Mr. President, I think that everyone in the country of Belize, including a child, have heard of Petrocaribe. And, indeed, the phrase Petrocaribe has even now been popularized in a song. So one would want to think that, well, if Petrocaribe is this great facility which is assisting the Government of Belize, why would anyone seek to speak against it as the Honourable Prime Minister has, time and again, suggested that is the position of those who simply require that the laws of this nation and the Constitution of this nation be complied with. You see, Mr. President, there are several reasons why, I am speaking for myself, and indeed, anyone ought to be concerned about the way in which the Petrocaribe loan has, in fact, been handled. You will recall last year in November when the matter was first brought before the Senate that the Honourable Leader of Government Business, as Senator Lizarraga pointed out, sad that “Oh, this is not a loan,” that it is some special creature but creditors facility, Senator Shoman reminded me, but they were nonetheless bringing the matter before the Senate in the form of a loan Motion and yet, the same thing is being done today. Well with the greatest of respect, Mr. President, only crazy people repeat doing the same thing when they ought not to. (Applause) With the greatest of respect, Mr. President, why is this Loan Motion being brought back if there is no necessity or requirement for it to be done?

Mr. President, it is even more fundamentally flawed what is being proposed in this form of this loan Motion, needs to be exposed. Well, Mr. President, common decency and respect dictates that is you are borrowing money and you are spending money on behalf of someone then at least you need to tell them from the get-go that you are borrowing and that this money that you are borrowing you are spending on their behalf. It is equivalent, and by way of analogy, Mr. President, you take out a loan in the joint names of yourself and your wife, you do not disclose. Your wife trust you and believe you and so she is not privy to the details, all she knows that your loan has been taken out in your joint names but she does not know that exact amount. Sometime later on a letter is sent to the home and the wife opens the letter from the financial institution and to her consternation she realizes that this is an extremely burdensome loan. “I didn’t know this is what we were agreeing to.” Then your response to her, “Oh, but why are you complaining, don’t you see we are spending the money?” Mr. President, common decency and respect would have required you to indicate the sum that you are borrowing, (Applause) and, indeed, that is what the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act of 2005, seeks to enshrine in law; that you forewarn the Belizean people, “Listen, we are about to borrow X amount of dollars. It is on your behalf that we are going to borrow this money, it is in excess of \$10 million and therefore we are telling you that we are bringing it to the National Assembly and by way of bringing it to the National Assembly public debate can be brought on the matter so as to discuss the merits or otherwise of the loan”. But the point of the matter is that common decency and respect required that you were forewarn,

you were told in advance. That is what section 7(2) of the Finance and Audit Reform Act enshrines in law as my learned friend, Senator Shoman pointed out, that is what I recall the Leader of Government Business would have raised held over back in 2005 and thereabouts that common decency and respect; if you are borrowing money on my behalf and I have to, I don't even have a choice, I am compelled by law to contribute to the repayment, then at least you should tell me in advance. That, Mr. President, is first and foremost why what is being done today is fundamentally flawed.

Equally important, Mr. President, is the fact that when loan Motions and borrowing are done on behalf of the people, the people need to therefore be in a position to take stock of how much debt they are tied to, how much debt the country is tied to. And that is important, Mr. President, because this morning we've had before this Petrocaribe Loan Motion, three previous Loan Motions; one in respect of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Rehabilitation in the sum of US\$13.5 million; then there was the CABEI Loan Motion in the sum of US \$30 million, and then this Loan Motion which is in the sum of \$28,353,589. Now, Mr. President, if you are taking stock as indeed, every good citizen should, as the Father of the Nation would have said, you would have realized that today the Government is borrowing US\$68,853,589 or \$137,707,178, almost \$140 million. These loan Motions which we've heard, the people of Belize are obligated by virtue of the tax laws in Belize to make their contribution.

But it gets even more absurd, Mr. President, because do you know that in a five months period, that is since October of last year, this Government has borrowed BZ\$617,190,248; that is over half a billion dollars that has been borrowed by this Government since October of last year. And let me show you, Mr. President, how that is arrived at that. In October we came to this Senate and a Loan Motion for the Caribbean Development Bank Philip Goldson Highway Upgrading Loan was approved. That was in the sum of US\$29,719,000 which is equivalent to \$59,438,000, about \$60 million, and then in November in one Sitting you had the Petrocaribe Loan Motion. At that time it was US \$114,307,000 which we were told that the Governmnet was borrowing after the fact, disrespectfully, that is equivalent of \$228,614,712. I am saying these numbers very fastly but these are very, very serious numbers. Then in that same day in November, there was also the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project Loan Motion, which totaled US\$30 million or BZ\$60 million. Then there was also the CBD Road Safety Revision, in that same day you know, a Loan Motion which totaled US\$4,558,000 or roughly BZ\$9,168,000. Then, there was also CDB Line of Credit to the DFC totaling US\$10,500,000 or BZ\$21,000,000. And then there was also on that same day, again the OPEC Belize City Southside Poverty Alleviation Project Phase 3 Loan Motion which totaled US\$15,220,000 or BZ \$30,440,000. So, Mr. President, in addition to what these Loan Motions today and those Loan Motions from October of last year, it is a 5-month period; the Government of Belize, they have borrowed \$617,000,000 plus. It is over half a billion dollars in five months, and yet they wish for us to just come here as though everything is fine and dandy and to say, "Oh, we are spending the money." The Government of Belize is creating debt slaves for our children and they expect us to be contented with that. (Applause) Mr. President, for those reasons I do not support this Loan Motion in the form and the way in which it has been brought to this Honourable Senate.

SENATOR P. ANDREWS: Mr. President, while both my colleagues have elaborated on this Loan Motion in such a detailed form, I only wish to stress one point again, and particularly for the Leader of Government Business, that once champion the Financial and Reform Act which today, Lead Senator, I hope to see, fury from that side of the House when we get to that one, Lead Senator. I hope I

am not disappointed, or maybe I should say I hope that the nation of Belize is not disappointed.

But, Mr. President, in September of last year according to this Loan Motion and up to February the Belizean people were shackled with \$60 million from this specific Loan Motion. My colleague just points out that over the last five months the Belizean people were shackled with over \$600 million of burden upon the shoulders of our Belizean young people. Now, my point, Mr. President, is that while we continue to drive our national debt to these outrageous figures and numbers, I continue to say, and one person said that good communication is to take that which is complex and to bring it down maybe to the grassroots or simplistic form. I have a problem when I see over and over, that the Belizean's money is being used for political expediency in this country, Mr. President. (Applause) The Belizean people in this country need to understand that this Government that is drunk in power and drunk in borrowing millions and millions of dollars up to the tune of almost a billion dollar, that they are using the people money for political expediency and that cannot and will not be tolerated. Someone asked me, imagine after February came March and after March we had four days for our municipal elections, and somebody asked me, "How much money did the municipal elections cost? Is it \$60 million or is it \$600 million that have been spent to secure this UDP Government to continue to remain in power?" And so, as I say, Mr. President, that this same Petrocaribe money will be the downfall of this Government because they continue to misuse and continue to burden the country of Belize with tremendous debts. (Applause) And we, on this side of the House, we will not remain silent. We will not remain silent while the injustice that is being carried out upon the youths of this country.

And again, Mr. President, sometimes it's hard to restrain yourself in the blatant act of injustice that is carried out from these Loan Motions. I mean, I don't want to repeat what has already been said so eloquently by my colleagues, but how could we borrow and spend, Leader of Government Business, and then come and ask for approval, man? This is a violation in all terms for good governments and the rules of law. This is gross violation for the rule of law of a democratic country and we are to sit here and remain silent. The Belizean people needs to understand the tremendous error and the erosion that this UDP Government is doing to our democracy. And so, Mr. President, for the record in joining with my colleagues that there is no way under these conditions, where the rule of law has been violated, not once, like I mentioned, but last November we here in this very House asking to approve over \$200 million under the same circumstances, that was spent without prior consent, without the knowledge, with having no details, where in the world could you find a Government spending over \$230 million without the consent of the people, man, this is ludicrously. (Applause) And I hope, again, that our people will see the tremendous error and so, Mr. President, I join with my colleague in rejecting the tremendous impact upon our democracy and upon the rule of law that is being carried out by this UDP Government by the violation through these Loan Motions. (Applause)

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, let me say a few words. We're not debating the Bill but my colleague said, "Where in the world could any government borrow this kind of money without the approval of the people?" I need to refer him to a US \$526,502,100 super bond that came about as a result of secrecy. (Applause) There was not one single Motion brought to this Senate to approve the 12 different borrowings that made up that super bond until we consolidated it into this super bond. (Applause)

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: Mr. President, with all due respect to the Leader of Government Business. He can't be making these statements without being able to verify what has just been said. That is not true.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, the point is that when we talk about the Finance and Audit Act, and I won't give the genesis because you ought to be there to know the genesis, we'll do it when we do the Bill. But the point is, that this particular Motion is not asking the Senate to approve. My good colleague, Senator Shoman, is correct, it is asking to confirm and validate the borrowing and I hear her not prepared to do that. The other two Motions asked to approve and confirm. The reason for that, Mr. President, is that the loan agreement and I said this is November; the loan agreement is not like these ones we just asked, that is the CABEI and the Kuwait Fund. The loan agreement was done in 2012 and the agreement is clear, for every shipment of fuel that comes, half will be paid and half will go to supplier's credit, you pay it later, 25 years at 1%. So, every time the shipment comes, APBEL is the vehicle to manage this. Government draws down a certain amount and it comes here and tells you what it draws down, man. He comes and tells you that he draw down \$28,000 now and provides a supplementary, and this is how it went. And it will come back to say, I heard the Prime Minister said every three months. So, please man! It's not asking you to approve, it's the approval to do the transaction was done in 2012. We could have said then, "Oh, we are not interested in this at all, we want to pay for all our fuel. Or we will take our portion of the credit and use it to help develop the nation as we are doing now, and pay 1% over 25 year. It is soft, good money to develop the nation and I will tell you better than that. I understand from the Venezuelans that you can pay in kind too. Hopefully we get our commodities up and running and we can ship to defray the outstanding amount which would even be better because the foreign exchange would not have been gone. So the point is, every single time we draw down a certain amount we come here, man. Let's be open, transparent, upfront, not like in the past when we never know, and we had to guess and speculate. We come here with it and say, "This time it is \$28,000, next time it is \$30 something thousand, etcetera." But the agreement to do this was done in 2012. It is right in the Motion. Mr. President, I move that the question be put.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Can I ask a question before we move on? If we are not asking the Senate to approve a Loan Motion, what are we doing here? What are we doing here? (Applause) I wish the Leader of Government Business to explain to me why there is a Loan Motion before this Chamber which we are not being asked to approve, (Applause) but we are instead being asked to "confirm and validate"? I understood that the reason we have loan Motions is that so we approve them. And if we are not doing that, then why are we here? Why are we putting this to a vote? (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honorable House,...

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: I need a response, Mr. President, he's not to respond to my question, because I have a question?

MR. PRESIDENT: Call the question.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: The question is, Mr. President that I would like to know why it is that the language does not call upon us to approve but rather is asking us to confirm and validate? Is it because the Leader of

Government Business knows that it is against the law to approve something after the fact? (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator, the question has been put and that's what I will do now.

Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the loan proceeds from APBEL, on the terms and conditions set out above, would greatly assist the GOB in achieving the aforesaid purposes, confirms and validates the borrowing by the GOB from APBEL of the total sum of US\$28,776,243.39 during the period September 2014 to February 2015.

All those in favour, kindly say aye...

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: I call for a division, Mr. President. I specifically asked for a division. (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator, this is a loan Motion, why the need for a division?

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: I want to put it on the record, Mr. President. We have that right, any vote can be put to a division. (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: I don't see the need for it, Senator. This is a loan Motion.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: No, it's not proper! It is not proper! If I have claimed that division, Mr. President, it should be put to a vote of every single Member in this Chamber.

MR. PRESIDENT: This is a loan Motion, Senator, so I don't see the need for a division.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Please, Mr. President, guide me to the Standing Orders where I am wrong and you are right. (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: So we continue with this Sitting and I call on the Leader of Government Business.

7. Official Charities Fund Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, BE IT RESOLVED THAT this House approves the expenditure of \$2,352,589 from the Official Charities Fund as detailed in Appendix A of the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2016.

Mr. President, you know that these are monies that are made available to the various charitable institutions such as the Salvation Army, to help the poor and the indigent throughout the course of the year.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, you know when I saw this issue of the Salvation Army, when I heard just now that my learned friend is talking about the Salvation Army in the Official Charities Fund Motion, it is something that I could never bring myself to question. But when I take up my responsibility under being a Member of this Chamber, and I look in the budget, the Draft Estimates for this year, which in Appendix A at page 205, list out the Official Charities Fund Motion. I'll tell you what I see, Mr. President.

Even though the National Sports Council comes under the Ministry of Sports, the National Sports Council is listed on the Official Charities Fund at \$50,000. The Belize City Center is listed at \$25,000. The Belize District Sports Facilities is listed at \$60,000. The Stann Creek District Sports Facility is listed at \$20,000. The Toledo District Sporting Facility is listed at \$20,000. The Cayo District Sports Facility, well, Cayo is lucky, Cayo is listed at \$50,000. The Corozal District Sports Facility is not so fortunate, they are listed at \$25,000. All of these monies, Mr. President, should not come under the Official Charities Fund; it should be listed under the Ministry head. When it is included here, it means that charities that are deserving, that do serious work for the people of Belize, for instance, that work with the poorest of the poor and the neediest of the needy, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, cannot enjoy a bigger share of the Official Charities Fund because we try to keep that within a certain limit. Here we are, Mr. President that the St. Vincent de Paul Society gets a measly \$4,300 a year and yet we have listed in the Estimates thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars for sporting facilities and we are calling it part of the Official Charities Fund. It doesn't get any better, I am sorry to tell you. There is three heads that come one after another that I question why they are not in the Ministry of Human Development. Assistance to the deserving cases, deserving cases of what? Social Assistance, and that is a big one, you know, Mr. President, that doesn't get a little bit of money. That gets a whopping \$434,000. Really it is something that should be budgeted for in the Ministry of Human Development. Community Service, I don't know community service for what or by who, \$115,000.

And if that were not bad enough, Mr. President, we move on from there and we look at organizations that are listed here like the National Library Service. Why is the National Library Service a charity, Mr. President? I recall seeing the National Library Service, if I am not mistaken, in the Ministry of Education. What is it doing here? Why is it part of the Official Charities Fund? Legal Aid, Mr. President, I recall seeing a budget head in the Attorney General's Ministry for legal aid and yet here is the legal aid on the program for \$10,000, twice the amount the poor St. Vincent de Paul Society is getting. But, you know, Mr. President, the assistance to sports is not done either. Assistance to sports, \$75,000. Again, why is that not budgeted for in the Ministry of Sports?

Youth Development Activities, budgeted \$25,000, and why is that not in the Ministry responsible for Youth? The Nationals Women Commission, why is this not in the Ministry of Human Development? Child Care, why is this not in the Ministry of Human Development? Burial Assistance is in here, why is this not in the Ministry of Human Development? Who manages these funds? Mr. President, there is one here for women's programs, \$20,000. Who manages that and for what? Youth Hostel, why is the Youth Hostel, which is something that if we are running and helping, why is that not in the Ministry responsible for Youth? The National Committee for Families and Children, why is that a part of the Charities because this is a quasi-government organization and it really should be under the Ministry of Human Development. The National Youth Development Center, why is that not under the Ministry of Youth? Youth Enhancement Services, \$60,000. why is that not in the Ministry responsible for Youth and Sport, that is supposed to be under the Ministry of Health. That is a measly \$5,000 by the way, just so we

know. And yet thousands upon thousands of dollars when I see a worthwhile organization like Belize Cancer Society is getting a very paltry \$15,000. The Louisiana Music Teacher is listed as an Official Charity, the only place in the whole country. I want you to know that the Louisiana Music Teacher gets more money for the year, than the Belize Cancer Society. Maybe I missed it, Mr. President, maybe I missed it. I am sorry to tell you because I am looking, I am really looking, I don't see the assistance to the Salvation Army here. (Applause)

The National Council and Ageing and Helpage, really it's high time, that should be under the Ministry of Health. I don't grudge any of these organizations the help and assistance that they are getting. The point here is that when we are budgeting the line ministries should be doing a better job of taking up their responsibilities. The Blood Donor Service shouldn't be here as a charity, man. That is a vital part of our medical program. That is a vital part of what should be done under the Ministry of Health, and it should be budgeted for properly and taken care of and not have to be depending on the Official Charities list to get \$15,000 a year when it is a necessity; no wonder we see people crying out on the radio and crying out on Facebook, when there is an accident or somebody is hurt, "please come to the hospital to give blood." because otherwise you might not get the authorized money that is needed.

A little personal anecdote, you know, Mr. President, in January unfortunately my 97 year old grandmother slipped and fell, she broke her hip. We had to find the blood, Mr. President, to put in the blood bank, let me tell you, we had to find it. So I know what it is, as many of us know what it is to have to be calling up your friends and family putting out the word and hoping that you are going to be able to figure out who will give blood. And we think it is so important, as a country, that we stick it under the Official Charities list and only fund \$15,000 for it. No man, Mr. President, we need to do better than this. We need to do better than this. This isn't normally a head that takes up any kind of an amount of debate but I really could not, after having looked through this, I really could not let the opportunity go by to point out that we can be giving a lot more assistance to charities in this country by not padding this list with headings that really and properly belong under line ministries. Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Mr. President, I have but a few short comments. I am sorry I was out when they spoke the Louisiana Village Music Teacher. I don't know if she has a particular program that is helping convert all those people in the Louisiana Village into band players or whatever, but I was wondering why only Louisiana Village was singled out. Mr. President, a comment and a suggestion. I won't repeat those observations but I heard the Honourable Senator speak about, but it concerns me that subhead 18, 20, and 21 which talks about assistance to deserving cases, social assistance and care of delinquencies is not under a ministry that is trained and is properly equipped to disburse this. I don't know how these are disbursed, assistance to deserving cases, such as, I don't know how you determine that. I would think that that would better be disbursed through the Ministry of Social Services. Or for example, the Social Security Board has a fund that is disposal for social assistance. Here we see \$434,000 for social assistance. I know the Social Security has a fund that is approximately \$1.2 million a year for social assistance. Shouldn't we be looking at pooling all of this under the social services or giving this money, I mean we have already allocated a portion of social security income for social assistance. Why do we have these separate funds all over the place?

And the next thing is, I agree that if we are doing so well, perhaps we should be taking better care of some of these NGO's, especially the NGO's. It

burns me as well to see, you know, certain charities receiving \$4,000 and \$5,000 HIV/AIDS Support, \$5,000. I mean that is not going anywhere. Women's Network Issues, \$4,000, you know, so, I think perhaps the time has come, maybe we should apportion a percentage of our budget for charities pretty much in the same way it is done in the case of Social Security. Those are only points I wish to add. (Applause)

SENATOR N. LESLIE: Mr. President, I cannot bypass this very special document on the charities, how monies are being disbursed, I appease that such limited funds are granted to some of the organizations for example, the St. Vincent de Paul society which reached out to so many poor people in our country. Also, the hand in hand Ministry that helps to construct homes for people. Through enough they are private organizations, Mr. President, but I am quite sure that the government can reach out to these organizations in a more charitable way to help them to provide more for our people. Now, of course, when I look at the National Library Service, you know, in this modern age it is just not a matter of buying books, we are talking about technology today. I believe that the Library Services throughout our country should be given as much modern equipment that will help our young people to be able to do research, and not only young people but also older people in our society, Mr. President, to be able to be able to carry out their research work and so forth.

Legal Aid, there are many persons in our country who are in need of legal assistance and, of course, \$10,000 allocated to that is not enough. Again, I believe that that area should be looked at quite carefully by the Government. The Senator for the Business Community mentioned about pooling, pooling our resources, yes that is an area that needs to be looked at, there is duplication of services so apart from the people being responsible for these various organizations if they could come together and the Minister in charge of various services, they come together and see how they can pool their resources to benefit our people better, that would be something quite good for our society.

So, Mr. President, yes, there are some areas that do need to be looked at and I believe that much improvement can be made, for example, we have the HIV/AIDS Support, more could be allocated to that and also the Cancer Society. These are agencies in our society that are providing a service to our people. Mr. President, I believe that our government and various the ministries should look at these agencies and see how they can help to promote the good that they are trying to achieve in our society. Thank you very much, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, it is just for the people clapping back there and the media, they need to know that, and I agree with the good Senator, for the first time I have ever seen this Official Charities engender such debate and discourse because this figure is a recycled figure. I has been going on for years and years and years, it's the same year repeat to each of the organizations from as long as I can remember this \$2 million and odd, so it is not only this year, it is not a new thing. But, yes, I hear you but some years ago when I asked I found out that because the ministries, no ministry has the capacity to give out any money without a specific process for disbursement of funds which involves approval, etcetera, through the CITO system, these funds are set aside to these organizations to deal with the kind of handouts, etc, that they have to do, the void of the organized structure CITO system. And, yes, they can perhaps be adjusted back and forth, Father, I'll suggest you send in a letter to the Ministry and perhaps some of them you feel could do better and less but that is the general reason for it. I can tell you, there are many

walk-ins into our ministry, “Help us with this, help us with that.”, but we are not structured. Government system is not structured, you just don’t dip into government money to help anybody, you have to have a specific fund allocated for that and that is how you can then give them those monies and then you are not subject to any detailed audit because you had \$20,000 or \$30,000 or \$40,000 to give out. I move the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is BE IT RESOLVED THAT this House approves the expenditure of \$2,352,589 from the Official Charities Fund as detailed in Appendix A of the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2016.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Mr. President I am really sorry, but before we go there, before I asked that the Senate put a Motion to a division. This has been done before, Mr. President. I recall most memorably that I moved a Motion before this House and so did Senator Lizarraga and we had a vote on them by division. I quote to you, Mr. President, section 45 of the Standing Orders of this Honourable Chamber, “Save as otherwise provided in section 73 of the Belize Constitution Act, or in these standing Orders all questions proposed for decision in the Senate or in any Committee shall be determined by a majority of the votes of those present and voting.” And it goes on to talk about if the President is not a Senator, he shall neither have an original vote nor a casting vote. Mr. President, it says, “At the conclusion of a debate,” at section 46 “upon any question the President shall put that question for the decision of the Senate and shall collect the voices of the Ayes and the Noes, after which no further debate can be taken.” But, Mr. President, if a division is claimed by section 47, “In a division the Clerk shall call each Senator’s name separately and such Senator shall indicate how he or she desires to vote.” Mr. President, this is what I called for, a division. The rules allow for it, Mr. President, and I put it that the presidency really should, for the record, on the loan Motion for Alba Petrocaribe, put it to a division because that is what the rule says, that any question (Applause) is determined by a majority of the votes present and voting, not just that only way to put a question is for Ayes and Noes for Motion. It doesn’t say that.

MR. PRESIDENT: I was aware of that, Senator, but I base myself on being a loan Motion.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: There is no difference in a loan Motion, Mr. President. It’s no different from any other question. It is a specie of question. (Applause)

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Mr. President, one second. I really take objection as well, because if you are going to ask us to say ‘Ayes’ or ‘Noes’ and if you are going to say the Ayes have it. How do you know who the Noes are? (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: Okay, we continue with this, Senators. So, All those in favour, kindly say aye...

We are on the Official Charities Fund Motion, Senator.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: No, Mr. President, I didn’t claim a division on that. You already put the question to it. I am saying, I claimed a division in terms of the Alba Petrocaribe Loan Motion, which is a Motion. The fact that it is a loan

Motion doesn't make it any more magical, or any more special or exempt from a division. I claimed a division on the Alba Petrocaribe Loan Motion. (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: We have dealt with that matter, Senator.

II BILLS FOR SECOND READING

1. General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to appropriate certain sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending March 31, 2016.

Mr. President, the Bill before us deals with the appropriation for the period April 1st of 2015, to March 31st of 2016, and it states that several sums of money appearing in the schedule hereto are hereby declared to be payable for the Financial Year ending on the 31st day of March, 2016 in respect of the services mentioned in the schedule and shall be charged on the revenue for the year and on other funds of Belize. And any sum not exceeding the amount set down under each head, the schedule hereto, may be issued and spent in respect of establishment of service specified or referred to therein.

Suspension of the debate on the General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): In accordance with Standing Order 10(8), I move that the proceedings on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members the question is that the proceedings on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Resumption of the debate on the General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Mr. President, thank you. Mr. President, as you know, not too long ago we received our big book for this year. Thankfully, it was about half the size or perhaps less than half the size as it normally is. It lost some fat but it hasn't lost any money. It has lost a lot of detail and it set a lot of targets. But the thing is, Mr. President, before this Sitting, on Saturday, I received a new package of papers which included this Bill and I looked at the Bill just to see if the numbers were the same. And while we come to debate this budget today, for we assume the numbers in this book we see that the numbers have already changed in this little piece of paper called the Bill.

I would like to start just by mentioning a few big ones. I haven't gone into

my presentation yet. The Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology and Public Utilities, you have been cut by over \$5 million; Ministry of Works and Transport has been cut by over \$3 million. Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, this is one of the big ones, this is what they champion the budget on, has been cut by \$2 million. Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, cut in half. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture has gone up by \$2 million and odd. Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development has been cut by almost \$10 million. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has gone up by about \$300,000. Ministry of the Attorney General's Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are up by \$1.4 million. Ministry of Health up by almost 1 million and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has been cut.

Mr. President, why do I go through this? This year we start a new budget formatting called program budgeting and these programs or these items that we are targeting in this year's budget have already been allocated according to this big book. So programs are expected to perform, targets are expected to be met and we haven't started yet; when does this come into effect? This comes into effect on the 1st April, and it already changed, it's already cut. Capital III has been changed; Capital II has some changes as well. We wonder why, no explanation.

Mr. President, I commence by commending the political directorate of our nation on its recent municipal electoral victory. But the true spoils of such a victory should be an increase in industry and sobriety as our national prayer encourages and a greater determination to truly serve the best interest of present and future generations of Belizeans. Even today, as we present our views on this Draft Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure for 2015/2016, I would like to draw our collective attention one particular law, S.I. 95 of 2010. These laws, Mr. President, as we know were passed by this very same Administration, they are called the Fiscal Transparency and Responsibility Regulations of 2010, Statutory Instrument number 95 of 2010, states The Government of Belize is committed to enhancing fiscal transparency and accountability in the conduct of its affairs. It is expedient to provide a framework for sound fiscal discipline and public scrutiny of fiscal policy and performance at all levels. It goes on to say, conduct all its fiscal policy in accordance with the following principles; transparency in setting out of the fiscal policy objectives, transparency in setting out of fiscal policy targets; and the implementation of fiscal policy and the publication of public accounts. It says, "fairness at all levels including fairness between the present and future generations." It says, "Fiscal strategy will be set out in a fiscal strategy statement and regular fiscal reports including a fiscal outlook and mid-year review report will be published." Mr. President, to date this National Assembly has not been provided with any forward looking fiscal policy statement, strategy statements or any reports that resemble physical outlook (Applause) or any mid-year review reports of our budget.

This budget is suppose to be an attempt at program budgeting. If this budget is to suffice then there is much, much, more to be desired, Mr. President. Many of the targets or KPI's in this budget are listed but remain blank, unanswered. Additionally, the program performance information which is provided is often too vague. You know, this morning I was on Rise and Shine Plus Television and I just opened the book at random to try and show the host what I was talking about. Every page I pulled at random had no KPI targets listed, none, no measureable targets. Is that program budgeting? The very purpose of this new format is to clearly measure at the end of the year what tangible and measurable successes we have achieved. We have to be able to judge them, this is what your project, this is what you did with the money that we gave you. If this tool is used as it should be, we will then ensure that we get maximum bank for our buck. The

key to the success of this tool is based on having numerically measurable targets and this budget falls too short. How can we hope to have measurable targets unless clearly identifiable goals are quantifiably stated and identified by all ministries, man. (Applause) This is not multiple choice where you can choose or ignore, yes, no, blank; you have to fill it in. Unfortunately, Mr. President, Belize deserves poor grades in respect of the management and planning for spending of our public funds as substantiated by data provided in this year's budget and previous year's budget. Mr. President, confirmation of our budgeting inadequacies maybe found as well in 123 page document I just came across called Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessment, PEFA. Government of Belize 2014 which was undertaken by the European Commission and the Government of Belize to assess the status of Belize's Public Finance Management System.

I will also, Mr. President, refer to data from a 34-page report on proposed cost saving strategies for the Government of Belize. I strongly recommend that we all become familiar with these two documents, including members of the public, NGO's, students, and especially the press. If we are truly interested in seeing an independent verification of the countless weaknesses that we have lamented in this very Honourable Senate for many years, we will take a look at those documents. Many of the things that at the time the business sector, Senator Hulse, as he was then, lamented about. I must add, Mr. President, that many of these things identified are also in the Auditor General's Report. By the way, a report, once again, just came out that says, "In my opinion the financial statements do not give a true and fair value of the government's financial position, 31st March, 2012." *Nada*, bad report. Alarming, but not surprisingly, this administration continues to receive very poor grades in the management control oversight transparency of public money and accounting for public money. I am not saying that, both the 2008 and 2014 PEFA Reports say that. (Applause) There is clearly, Mr. President, a dire and desperate need for effectively addressing the following areas because they all impact on our public finances and the spending of our taxes. Some main problem areas persist and I highlight but a few. The reports says and I quote, "A formal debt management strategy has not been prepared and incorporated into draft annual budgets partly because the Government does not yet prepare debt sustainability analysis." Here we are, borrowing, I'll get to borrowing right now, billions and we don't know whether we can sustain the debt or not. I did not say it, it was the European Commission. Now we know that this administration has shown that it prefers to fly in the dark without radar because it does not suit them to admit publicly, or even to know what we actually owe, what our national debt is, and is it really sustainable. The only concern demonstrated by this administration, we see by its budgets, is the determination to maximize borrowings and be damned the statistics. According to the PEFA Report as well, internal control rules are not enforced and accountability is not demanded. Internal control for non-salary expenditure are deficient and they are a wide spread breaches and lack of control in government budget execution. It is not from me, PEFA. Even though, the report says, general and specific rules for sound financial internal controls are clear accountability as defined in Finance and Audit Reform Act, 2005, an Act we are going to push aside today, the Financial Orders and in the Control of Public Expenditure Handbook.

Mr. President, not only does this administration not care about how recklessly or unsustainably they borrow but here we see as well they just don't care about protecting and properly managing and accounting for how our monies are spent as well. It is not me, it is PEFA. It says, "The responsibilities of Accounting Officers are clearly stated as well as the sanctions that should be imposed on any public officer incurring expenditures without proper authorization." However, it says, that there is no systematic training and these

rules have not been well established in practice so as to prevent malpractices from reoccurring. Internal control rules are not enforced and accountability is not demanded. (Applause) This is the management that we have. We ask why, why, Mr. President? How can those managing our country continue to fail in the very basics of management? Any management should be expected to follow clear rules of sound financial internal controls. PEFA continues, it says that, “controls over the payroll appear at first to be robust but it is very difficult to verify”. It says, “As complete integration and reconciliation is not conducted between personal records and payroll. The correctness and timeliness of the data is open to doubt.” And, it says, “An unknown number of personnel are not in the database and receive their salaries directly as payables, direct from the institutions budgets and not through the payroll.” Why, Mr. President, why does the Ministry of Finance continue to allow this to happen? Secret payroll accounts, why? This item is especially worrisome.

As we know, payroll makes up approximately 50% of our budget and yet, Mr. President, page 109 of this current budget, discloses that from 2012 to 2015, under the heading “Climate Change and Sustainable Development” thousands are spent, \$152,000 in 2014 to 2015, alone for Personal Emoluments but listed under staffing resources, zero, zero, zero, zero! No staff exist. We apparently have ghost employees who paid though, and well paid although they do not exist on record. Here in this example, Mr. President, we see that our records are either overstating payroll expenses, or understating the number of employees. In any case, how can that inspire confidence? How can you expect us to be inspired by this if that is what we see? How can a government continue to operate not knowing, in fact, who it is paying, how many persons are on its payroll, where is the money coming from to pay them? Is this, Mr. President, another hot bed of corruption?

The procurement system, PEFA says, has not changed since 2008. The existing procurement legislation has not been strengthened and those weaknesses identified back in 2008 remain in 2014. According to PEFA, in Belize opened competitive tendering is not the default method of procurement. What is worse is, it says, “the justification for using limited competition procurement methods is non-transparent and public access to information is limited.” It seems that no steps are even being taken by this administration to change the method used because as the report laments, the establishment of a procurement regulatory unit in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is still in the planning phases for many years. Why we ask? Simply put, the political will does not favor open competitive tendering for government procurement of goods and services. Why is this crucial matter not addressed? Are we not interested, Mr. President, in getting the most value for our tax dollars spent? As a result, Mr. President, much promise transparency and accountability in the handling and spending of our tax dollars suffers and continues to be nothing more than pure lip service, *blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah!* It is nothing but hot air. (Applause)

PEFA notes that the only dedicated administrative procurement oversight mechanism including complaint receiver, the Contractor General we are talking about now, he is understaffed and has very limited capacity. The Contractor General’s budget, Mr. President, which is included in the budget of this very Legislature has actually been cut, listen to this. In 2012/2013, he was getting \$213,000. In 2013/2014 he was getting \$183,000; it went down, in 2014/2015 they gave him \$5,000 more and this year now \$172,000 for an overall reduction of 20% in the past four years. Now, this is the office with all the responsibilities of overseeing contracts. With all the responsibilities that he has, he only has three staff. And do you know what, it is going to remain like that because projected through with the new format, you see three, three, three right down to 2018. Check page 42 of the budget, okay. So, to put the gravity now in perspective, the

function of the Contractor General is to monitor the award, the implementation and termination of public contracts and to investigate instances of irregularities and the mismanagement arising from such contracts. His job is to make sure that we get proper value for money spent and if we do not, we know at least how or who spent the money. And yet the poor Contractor General only has two staffers beside himself. And listen to this, his only stated key program strategy or activity for 2014 and 2015, was how to lobby more effectively for staffing or how to lobby more staff in order to complete more tasks spending efficiently. Well, not only did he not get it but he won't get it for the next three years. That was only target, you know. That was his only target, no KPI, his only target. He didn't say, "I will review so many contracts.", he didn't even say, "I will refuse so many contracts." He didn't even say anything else. His only target was, "I want more staff.", and I can understand why. So, he didn't even bother to quantify any of his key performance indicators.

The PEFA says that the assessment team was informed that the development of a public procurement handbook has been going on for a long, long time and it's still awaiting Cabinet's approval. And, again, we continue to ask why. Why? PEFA cites problem as well in the preparing of annual financial statements leading to their insufficient comprehensiveness. Now, I checked up the meaning of comprehensiveness, it means lack of detail, too much hidden and accuracy, it says, which means lack of truth and precision. So we look at page 13 and page 26 of this budget book and compare the summary totals on both pages and I went to take up the time, I'll give that to you as homework, but the totals on both these pages, they differ and vary considerably. So which page is correct? Is it page 13 or page 26? And then, they differ from the one submitted today. These grave inconsistencies serve to verify what the PEFA Report is saying and it creates serious doubt in our basic budgeting abilities or basic accounting abilities, and the low level of importance displayed by those entrusted with drafting our budgets and providing us with credible information.

Mr. President, additionally, we see that we have accounts, government accounts all over the place. Today, we are passing a law that will allow for the opening of a new one. We have accounts in the commercial banks, we have accounts in the Central Bank, and yet, Mr. President, the cash position of these accounts were not reported to the Accountant General. So the Accountant General didn't have a full overview of government's cash position and therefore these accounts could not be consolidated into one cash balance. What is the effect of this? Well the effect of this is that we spend money on overdraft when we shouldn't. The report cites that we spend like \$4.8 million on overdrafts because we are using money from this pocket when this other pocket is loaded. We are borrowing money from here because we think we don't have yet we have money in this other account over here. When with proper cash flow management and if the Accountant General knew of all these accounts and their balances she could better project and use our cash resources, eliminating the need for high and expensive 11% overdraft from the Central Bank of Belize. Program budgeting is meant to strengthen the linkages between policy objectives and budgeting and to help strengthen the preparation of forward estimated of expenditure within the medium-term perspective. Strengthening should ensure that the future recurrent costs implied by committed capital investments are reflected. What do I mean by this?

Many times, we spend on capital, for example, we will spend on the highway again. But we do very little in budgeting for the maintenance of those roads. So, we undermine ourselves. We spend huge amounts on capital for road construction but very little for roads maintenance and we maintain again, that these huge transformations that we have had to experience is because of huge

neglect. That highway again on the south, was one of the best highways in the country a few years ago. We taxed especially to maintain that highway. That money was not used for that because now we have to go resurface the entire highway. Neal Pen Road, I love to travel Neal Pen Road, it was redone last year with asphalt not with cement and beautiful. This morning I traveled Neal Pen Road; at least one dozen holes this size, arms length across, honest to goodness I don't believe that road has been redone more than six months ago, it can't be. Maybe a year ago at the most, and it is filled with holes, no monies budgeted for maintenance of these capital expenditures that we make. And the sad part is that we know that maintaining and maintenance is more cost effective and more sustainable. This is where we can get the creation of jobs. This is sustainable employment. Yet, if you look throughout this book I see some ministries there \$2,000, \$5,000 how will you maintain a government building with that. Look at this very building. (Applause) No windows that are designed for air-conditioning. Look at the holes, we are refrigerating the whole of Belmopan. The most disturbing pattern that is clearly evident in the last three budget cycles and which becomes increasingly clear, even with this new budget format is that while government pays lip service to accountability and transparency and the handling of the people's money, the discipline of program budgeting, the actual spending that occurs has been and will continue to be driven by short term political expediency as revealed by the Prime Minister's Budget Speech and confirmed by the constant amendment of the rules and laws of our country to feed the borrowing needs. (Applause)

Hence, we have the Bill today, my apologies, Mr. President, for being a bit premature this morning. I wanted to speak on the Bill and I have been focusing on this presentation. I was lost for a moment there but I have regained myself. Any politician, Mr. President, or government who's primary focus is political triumph rather than sustainable national growth and development will continue to rely on borrowing and spending while assorting that such borrowing and spending equals growth. And we know this to be unsound policy which is largely illusionary unbridled borrowing eventually brings nothing but pain and misery. (Applause) As Greece, as Spain, as Argentina, look around the world. What is much more difficult, Mr. President, and desperately needed in Belize today is stimulating the national economy by supporting and sustaining the creation of real wealth not by sustaining the creation of debt. I found this quote and I really liked it. It says, Henry Ford said it, great American auto magnet. It says, "Any man who thinks he can be happy and prosperous by letting the government take care of him, had take a closer look at the American-Indian". Mr. President, what we must do is improve the standard of living for our people by providing sustainable opportunities and sustainable employment. A sound and sustainable plan is needed to uplift the nearly 50% of our people living in dire poverty. We need to hire the thousands of students who are leaving school every year, possibly up to 8,000 per year. Where is our plan to sustainably lower the poverty rate? For example, Costa Rica, this year, launch their program to lower its poverty rate by 4%. Where is our plan to measurably lower the poverty rate in Belize? Our future, however, seems, because of the actions of this government's stated legacy, to be doomed to a downward spiral of borrowing and borrowing and spending and spending and buying and buying election after election after election. (Applause) Does the end justify the means? Is political triumph of more value than the present, the future, economic viability or sustainability of our nation and our people. Somebody said over there a while ago, "We are becoming debt slaves." We are debt slaves. We do not comprehend how people cannot see that our rapidly ballooning indebtedness will have negative consequences not only for us today, you know, but for future taxpayers as well. Do we not know that these debts will need to be repaid and that our tax burden as a consequence, will continue for many, many, many years to come? Do we not know the impact this will have on

our competitiveness as a country our ability to produce cheaper goods and services for our national and international clients? We will not talk about the rice. Do we realize that this unsustainable borrowing, yes, statistics, damn the statistics will haunt generations to come including the unborn? (Applause) How is this fulfilling the requirements of S.I. 95 of 2010, that provides for fairness at all levels including fairness between the present and future generations? How? How is this fair?

Let's look at our national debt. In looking at the budget numbers presented we noted, of course, that this administration continues to live on the buzz, this high, elixir, borrowed money, pretending, Mr. President, that we will never have goma. We will never suffer hangover. No sobering period insight. Trust me, Mr. President, or withdrawal and goma when we come down from this temporary high, will be nothing nice. (Applause) The sad part is that the ones who will suffer the most from this hangover and from this goma, are not the ones who get the most high. The persons who will suffer the most are the one that get the shish, the crumbs, that they scrape off the table of these favored few and who feast in this intoxicating spring. What leads us, I am getting there, Mr. President, I am getting there.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator you are about to exhaust your time so, please, other Senators want to contribute.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Mr. President, in a few.

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: With your indulgence I'll yield 15 minutes of my time.

MR. PRESIDENT: What is the point of order?

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: No, with your indulgence I'll yield 15 minutes of my time to Senator Lizarraga. (Applause)

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Senator. What leads us awestruck and baffled, Mr. President, is that the Prime Minister himself acknowledges and we agree with him, we agree with him that this special period of plenty, this spending spree is not sustainable and certainly not recommended. We agree with the Prime Minister. (Applause) And yet, Mr. President, we do nothing to diverge from this path, we do nothing to project for the hard times, the pain and the suffering we know that's ahead. We continue to borrow and spend on the spree. We do not to truly transform, nothing to ease the burden place on the shoulders of our present and future taxpayers who will pay. We will pay you know, Mr. President, we will pay the tab for this huge bar bill, for this spending spree, we will pay. Instead of moving as a nation towards the achievement of economic freedom, we are sinking deeper and deeper into debt thanks to this fiscal free, spreadom. (Applause) It is not freedom, it is spreadom.

Mr. President, the actual borrowing needs and deficit for 2012/2013 in last year's budget presentation, the book before this, the big one, said that there is going to be the deficit for 2012/2013 was going to be \$78 million? But in this book, Mr. President, we see now that it has been restated with no explanations. Now, any person will admit that whenever, or any financial person should know that once numbers change especially on accounts that have already been closed and labeled as actual, that an explanation is needed and pending. No explanations have been provided to date, Mr. President. Last year's budget, again, we see 2013/2014, approved estimated were at \$125.8 million with the projected outturn at \$138.5 million. Well in this year's book we see that we actually had to borrow

\$177.85, \$52 million more than in the approved estimates. It got worst. I am not finished. In 2014/2015, approved borrowings were stated, this was last year, stated at \$124.45 million. Now in this book, in this budget, we see it is projected to come in at \$207.4 million which is \$82.95 pardon me, \$83 million more than approved. Last year we projected for 2015/2016 now, borrowing \$25 million. This year, however, we see the draft estimates estimating \$174 million. Some \$149 million more than projected and yet already we know that this administration intends to return again, with another dreaded Supplementary that could potentially force us to borrow; goodness knows how many more millions of dollars.

Mr. President, if you look forward now, we haven't gotten there yet. In 2016/2017, we haven't even finished this year and we already projecting for the next year. The forecasted for \$58 million, now we see it is at \$125 million, \$67.8 million more it is projected. But let us analyze our debt. In the Prime Minister's presentation it revealed that the current national debt stands at \$2,700 million or some \$7,714.28 for every man, woman and child in this country. This is a 33% increase in our stated national debt since 2003. Now, this, of course, in addition to the other promised debts we will incur this year through the Supplementaries I spoke about earlier. But the reality is that we are faced as well with additional liabilities and pending litigation including interest and principal payments from the acquisition of private companies which further exposes us to potentially another billion dollars in borrowing. This one item could amount to another \$2,857.14 per person in additional debt. Together, we now at up to \$10,571.42 potentially for each and every man, woman and child in Belize. But wait, Mr. President, I haven't finished yet.

It is clear that this government has not come clean on all that it owes, because both the reports I mentioned before confirmed this. I will highlight but one such example that of liabilities within the Ministry of Natural Resources for land acquisition as stated in the cost saving strategy for the Government of Belize which stated, and I quote, "It can only approximate due to the lack of information because acquisitions that took place falls out of the wood work every day." Everyday they are getting new ones. So the numbers I am about to quote can, and most probably will increase. The records said that they only look at 50% of the total land acquisition cases and that the other 50% of the records lack important information. The cost saving report claims that a rough estimate, rough, I stress rough, in this matter, rough estimate of our debt can be \$225 million plus interest. Now, they provided an example where a piece of land costing \$1.1 million will end up costing us over \$4 million. Do you hear that it is more than four times. So in this example, today, we owe more for the land this is after having paid down \$2.7 million in payments. We owe \$1.5 million on a piece of land valued at \$1.1 million. (Applause) So let us apply that formula. If we apply that formula because of the unknown and hidden acquisition debts spending we could easily be forced to borrow another \$1,000 million or another billion dollars just to settle our land debts or land acquisition. It is absolutely apparent that given the present appetite by this administration for borrowing and spending and incurring liabilities on our behalf estimating for the countless untold liabilities, providing for stated and hidden debt that each person in this country can have a debt burden in the vicinity of \$12,000 to \$13,500 per person, man, woman and child. Take a look at the two reports. Take a look at both reports. I encourage all of you. I am not saying this, look at the reports.

Today, we heard a while ago, you know we always used to talk about this dreaded super bond, they just mentioned it a while ago. But we admit today that we owe more than two times the dreaded super bond. (Applause) But that is what we admit. If you look at the undeclared debt and the pending litigation, we now owe potentially or fast approaching, not two, but three and a half super bonds.

(Applause) Keep in mind that we have to come up with over \$3,000 person, man, woman, and child every year for the budget of our country and will come up with the same amount next year and more or less the same amount the following year. There are those, Mr. President, that believe that all of this that I am talking about won't affect them; but it will because government captures about 25% of every dollar that you spend. Whether you buy your rice, whether you buy beans, whether you buy any basic item, it has some element of tax in it. We all pay taxes. We all will pay for these debts. (Applause)

Mr. President, while the budget is loaded with unsustainable spending, it is very silent on ways to make government more affordable especially through cost savings. The private sector maintains that any reasonable budget exercise will look at increasing cost efficiencies through cost savings as well, and welcomes the study commissioned by the government to do such. But we question, why did we not try to reduce expenditure or realize income through savings in the following areas recommended and make them a part of our KPI's for this budget year as well? Why was this not a prominent feature? If I were management and I was serious about saving money I would have blared that and made it prominent in this budget but not one mention of cost savings, not one. The cost saving strategy report states that lack of compliance and consistent monitoring remain obstacles to cost savings in government. It claims that only 7 key areas have been highlighted and saying that there are many other areas which could have been analyzed but for the time constraints of those reporting. They also state that were many, many challenges encountered in the gathering of information and factual data and one wonders why. It says the support and commitment of all the relevant stakeholders is crucial and one wonders why this commitment to saving taxpayers money has been absent? Why do we not reduce the cost of land acquisitions? This one single item is most worrisome. We don't know what we owe and neither does the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Natural Resources apparently does not keep the Ministry of Finance updated in this liability information and worse, Mr. President, the report actually said that they saw a need to state the Ministry of Finance must request and obtain proper documentation with updated information on the status of each acquisition before releasing funds for payment. this is saying that they release funds for payment and they don't have any documentation, not me, that report.

Mr. President, again, we see that there is an urgent need to reduce the number of unestablished and contract staff. There is, Mr. President, the reality that 50% of our budget or more goes on staffing. We think that we need to continue investing certainly in the training of our career officers and certainly give them the ability to grow from inside. Why do we always have to have contract officers? What about growing from inside, growing from within the public service, especially our dedicated career public service personnel?

Last year was the last year showing utility cost for individual Ministries? This new budget format will no longer allow us to scrutinize the utility bills of individual ministries. Today we see \$35 million allocated for utilities, but what we don't see is the apparent desire to correct waste and abuse and if we look at last year's bills, some of the telephone bills alone, were outrageous for some departments. No accountability exists; it appears for utility management and utility monitoring. In one example of that report that was given is that this very legislature which include several locations I was told, but in one month our bill was \$1,340.00 and in the other month, it was \$14,663.00. The report says that lights, air conditioning, computers and other equipment are left on after working hours even throughout the weekends in government buildings and government locations. We continue to realize lost income from representation overseas. The report mentions that we incur high administrative and operational cost in

maintaining embassies and consulate abroad but falls short on making recommendations on how we handle these. But it says that these bodies collect monies on behalf of the Government of Belize and these monies are not paid into general revenue as they are allowed to use the fund for operational expenses. And in addition, there are no reporting procedures for either the collection or the expenditure of these funds, yet we see the bill for overseas mission went up. This, Mr. President, is a clear breach of law or certainly a breach of the intent of the Constitution which speaks to the use and collection of public funds. (Applause)

Mr. President, we continue to believe and advocate that we need a serious and comprehensive exercise to consolidate ministries and services to bring about much needed efficiencies. Our government is too big and we are not sustainable and the cost of administration, salaries, perks, is well over 50% of our budget. The government employs, page 26 of the budget, 116,300 staff or 17% of the registered workforce. One out of every six of us work for the Government of Belize. Mr. President, we remain grateful for the improvement in tax administration and an increasing performance of the taxes. We still acknowledge that there are too many daggers and that there are those that continue to do handsomely from tax avoidance and this, Mr. President, hurts us all as it places undue and honourous burdens on those of us that pay and dooms us to continued high taxes, at both the national and local levels. We are happy that no new taxes are proposed but we continue to maintain and we look forward to that day where through efficient government our tax burdens can be lowered disincentivizing those that make a living by the huge margins afforded them by the huge tax rates.

Mr. President and colleagues, in closing, I wish to reiterate that the private sector will continue to support any and all administrative efforts which bring about true transparency and accountability and value in the spending of our taxes and public monies. While we are encouraged by Cabinet's request for studies that critique the public administration of our tax dollars and look forward to the day that such recommendations can and will be speedily implemented, we can however, colleagues, we can before we start to ask for more studies, why can't we just simply begin to follow the sound advice given by our Auditor General in her reports? Why don't we just start right here? Why can't we restructure the Public Accounts Committee to play its rightful role in oversight? Why can't we start there? (Applause) The Private Sector will support any endeavor that speaks to the creation of sustainable jobs and growth. We encouraged the commencement of consistent maintenance of public infrastructure all year round, not just seasonal. This strategy would be more cost effective and go a long way in not only providing needed sustainable employment, but also easing in the burdens created by totally having to transform or rebuild neglected infrastructure. We continue to rely for help, support and guidance by those committed and dedicated partners in the service of the public and remind them of the critical and important role that they play in the management of our taxes. We also remind all in Parliament of the Oaths sworn to protect and defend the Constitution. And the spirit of the Constitution and we ask that we all partner in seeking to improve our laws rather than seeking ways to circumvent them. We remind of our responsibility to create and enabling environment for the thousands of young citizens leaving our school system each year, and the challenge of transforming from poverty levels almost 50% of our people. We continue to seek true partnerships in the sustainable development of our nation where all Belizeans will be first. We are truly blessed to live in a country with wealth untold, Mr. President, but we squander this wealth, and the true owners of this wealth are being deprived primarily due to a lack of will among others, and our inability to properly manage our taxes. Hopefully, Mr. President, in the next year's budget we begin to see measurable indicators and, yes, statistics that indicate we are making a sustainable impact on employment, poverty and governance of public funds.

Mr. President, let me end by quoting from a recent article of Washington Times entitled “The Wisdom of Limited Government can be told in High Definition.” And I quote, Mr. President. It says, “Why have Chile, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Estonia, and the Cayman Islands all become relatively prosperous in recent decades while other countries have lagged.” The answer is not a mystery, but is often ignored or even suppressed by the political and media classes in many places throughout the world, because of many of them believe their truth will diminish the own political power. Countries that have the rule of law, protect private property, have free markets and free trades, have relatively low taxes, and government spending, (Applause) avoid destructive economic regulations, and have sound money, tend to grow at much faster rates than those countries that don’t”. Mr. President, we maintain that there is a direct link between accountability and good transparent governance as it relates to the improving of the standard of living for our citizens of Belize. Do you want to transform Belize? Let us get an active PSE. Let us activate the House and Senate Committees where ministers are not Members, or where Ministers cannot control. You cannot expect, Mr. President, that they will police themselves. This has not, and will not work. Do you want to transform Belize? Let an empowered Senate truly begin to perform its obligations as per the Constitution, and give us the 13th Senator that you promised. That will transform Belize. (Applause) So, Mr. President, if we wish to improve the standard of living for our citizens, the most efficient way of doing so is properly accounting for every penny of the people’s money spent. If we want to improve the standard of living for all the people of Belize we need to transform our governance systems, that is where transformation is most needed; (Applause) and that is where transformation should begin. Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues. (Applause)

SENATOR R. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I rise to make my comments and contribution to this discussion on how we spend scan taxes, loans and grants to be collected in the upcoming financial year. Of course, we know that these monies are never enough to provide many of the things that citizens need. The people I represent, indeed, have households and encounter this on a daily basis, they are used to it, in truth and in fact, that is why we have an interest in ensuring due process in the spending of our hard earned money. They have an interest to ensure that this is firmly ensconced in our system.

This year, again, and actually it’s for the third year in a row we continue to herald the importance of the regulations for fiscal transparency and responsibility. My constituency continues to press for a conspicuous implementation of S.I. 95 of 2010, even if it is done on an incremental basis. I welcome my colleague from the private sector in starting to sing this chorus that we’ve, each year, asking and encouraging that it be followed. We still hope for a definitive fiscal strategy statement in future budget cycles. We still hope for the opportunity to examine the fiscal outlook and the mid-year review reports. These are all important documents we think that will us as we move towards improvement in how the system works because it’s the system that we really need to concentrate on. We note and applaud the implementation of the program budgeting process. Now this program budgeting ideas have been around for over 10 years and this year we are seeing some real tangible ways in which it is actually being rolled out.

We note the improvement in the hierarchy of objectives in the inclusion of the mission statements, the vision statements, the strategic priorities and these are all a prelude and foundation for the respective program objectives of the line ministries. It will be, however, a marked improvement to see in subsequent budget estimates a more cogent articulation of the activities aimed at improving performance in the use of the finances allocated in the budget cycle. In my view,

the articulation of the performance indicators are still decidedly weak. I think my colleague spoke to some of those. Notwithstanding these, there is still a need to clarify though the evaluation mechanisms to measure the achievements for these line ministries independently. In our view, the role of annual reports lures large in this regard and we will continue to explore the virtues of these in the context of assuring value for money. It's probably the third time I'm repeating this. In fact, it may be opportune for an element of the program budgeting process to also include civil society within its evaluation mechanisms. After all, who would be better to evaluate the programs other than the very recipients of the respective service? I for one am sure that unions would be interested in evaluating the efficiency of the cost saving recommendation for revenue generations. Within this cycle we note the continuance of the two year forward planning structure and this, in our view, is one of the mechanisms that would allow us to manage our debt stock since we will know beforehand, the areas where borrowing would actually be beneficial because its already in or forward planning in the budget process.

We cannot decry the infrastructural initiatives being pursued, however, we consider that the enhancement of the human capital infrastructure is as critical as it is urgent when we put that beside our ongoing physical infrastructure rehabilitation. Grateful motorists, pedestrians and athletes will inevitably soon begin to regard the current physical improvement astride. The importance of our fiscal strategy should even now be promulgated while opportunities for funding are available because when the grace periods within which our debt repayment strategy expire the prevailing conditions may not even be on the horizon. If however, our citizens are engaged even at the sector level in the budget process then the opportunity for all to actively participate or actively enhance, we know that the government had previously initiated this consultation approach and we recall that budget discussions were held with the trade union congress in this regard. The unions continue to herald the importance of participation. The government has a duty to ensure that the unadulterated voice of the largest group of persons participating in our economy and that is the workers that their voices are heard. A one time attempt at inclusiveness in the budget process is certainly not enough. In fact, the sustainability of all our processes are assured by the active participation of all sectors and the government has to bear the burden if it is such of ensuring that the capacities for all sectors are strengthened to facilitate full participation. After all, it is easy to slide in on success and it is also easy to blame others for failures in which we did not participate. (Applause) We anticipate that the political muscularity of voters will also translate into the spending muscularity of the government being directed to ensuring the fullest possible participation of all sectors of our economy.

The Unions, like most, everybody is looking at both sides of the issue of the Petrocaribe funding. We are concerned about the mechanisms for accountability and transparency. (Applause) In this regard, the dysfunction of the Public Accounts Committee lose large and the vehement with which the opposing sides of this argument vent their protestations on for example, the Petrocaribe issue, needs to be redirected towards the re-establishment of this critical committee. It is imperative that the impasse be put to bed in order to get away and to give way to full functionality of the important oversight called the Public Accounts Committee. With that in place, the examination of the Auditor General, the Contractor General, the reports that they produce would be properly attended to assure judicious use of all of the loan funds that we have before us. Thank you.

SENATOR N. LESLIE: Madam President, I rise to speak about the General Revenue Appropriation Bill, 2015/2016 as was presented to us today. It is good to know that much is taking place to transform our country to make it be a very different place. As we contemplate the future, we realize that we don't have a

full detailed budget before us for the whole year. We have to await a supplementary budget that will come about later this year. It is quite unfortunate that we have to wait for that. But in between time, it is important for us to realize, Madam President, that yes, much must be made use of the finances that our country has at this time, to provide the best for our people. We must realize too that much will be expected of our government at this time. It is good for us to realize that no more taxes will be imposed at this time. That a relief for many of our people, at the same time we have to realize that yes, the country has to survive, somehow money has to be raised, somehow, so we have to consider that our country must progress in such a way as to provide necessary funds to provide necessary services for our people down the road.

We also have to realized, Madam President, that there are many projects before us and many of these projects are being sustained by grants and loans. At the same time, we must keep in mind that our local economy must be able to sustain itself and that such loans, loans that was received from foreign sources, must be repaid in time and so we have to make preparations through in the Bill before us. In the budget presented before us, we see that yes, we are considering down the road how we are going to pay back these loan but we must be careful that we don't overextend ourselves to such a degree that it become a burden for us in time. Yes, Madam President, we as members of this country realize that our country must become a self sufficient nation in time. Much must be done to lessen our dependence on foreign loans and grants. It is beautiful to know that the loans received are requiring just a low interest. That is something marvelous to be hold we don't want to ever dream that we are going to receive loans with high interest rates. But at the same time we can't allow ourselves to become so dependent on receiving all the time, on depending on loans to transform our country and the loans received must be spent wisely, Madam President. (Applause) It is very important that proper accounting be given at all times. We realize too that we spent some money before, monies were approved to be spent but was everything spent? What was left over? How will that money be utilized in the new projects, Madam President? And our major issue is our young population, Madam President. We cannot ignore our young people and, indeed, it is good to know that agencies along with the government are trying their best to provide programs to improve skills and so forth for our young people. But we must realize that much much more must be done to awaken our young minds to realize that they too must be instep with the progress of our country. They must be in harmony with the transformation of this land of our, this country of ours. Madam President, yes, we do look forward with great hope. At the same time, we must be vigilant, we must be very careful that we do not overextend ourselves in such a way that eventually we will have heavy burdens, burdens that will have to be repaid. I am talking about finances, in the future and eventually if we are not careful, Madam President, yes, we are not charging or raising taxes right now but if we are not careful that might be something down the road. (Applause)

So, self sufficiency, making sure that we create new industries in this land of ours, making sure that we develop a strong agricultural sustaining industries in our country, that is going to be very major for us to become self sufficient. Tourism, that is wonderful, it is good to know that more people are coming to our country, Madam President, but at the same time those areas of income can fluctuate. We have seen in the financial world, Madam President, how certain issues have affected countries. We in Belize, we must look forward to be a very strong financial sustaining nation and the work must begin now. (Applauses) Our government, Madam President, must be vigilant, they must be strong; our government cannot allow itself to drift along. The democratic process, Madam President, must be encouraged, enforced, sustained in this land of ours. Our people, Madam President, will be able to look at everything and say, "Yes, we are satisfied with what is

happening.” They will be able to live their lives with a sense of dignity, and sense of realizing, “Yes, things are working in this land of ours.” Madam President, yes, it’s unfortunate as I said before that we don’t have a fully detailed budget for the whole year. We have to look forward to the supplementary budget down the road. But it is my hope that good things will always come to the country of Belize; that our people will prosper, that our people will be able to look forward and say, “Yes, we are satisfied.” Madam President, I have shared my views and I pray that much good be achieved for our country during the course of this year. Thank you. (Applause)

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, every year as Members of the Senate we get a copy of the Draft Estimates for Revenue and Expenditure for the incoming fiscal year. This year has been no exception. It was presented to the House of Representatives on Friday March the 13, by the Prime Minister who prefaced the introduction by his budget speech, and then two week later, or around two weeks later, the House had an opportunity to dissect, comment, discuss, and then vote on the Draft Estimated for Revenue and Expenditure for the Fiscal Year, 2015/2016. It is perhaps an indictment on our system of governing ourselves that that ends up being the sum total of the participation in the budget that is allowed to opposition Members in the House, and to social partner Senators, and Opposition Senators in the Senate. We get, Madam President, in this Chamber 45 minutes more or less, more, if the Presidency is generous to debate these Draft Estimates. The big book that is given to us, this book, is the compendium of a wealth of fiscal financial information, government revenue, allocation, work, programs, targets, debt, expenditure and we also have some key performance indicators that are provided.

The business of running a government, Madam President, is a bit like running a business, however, there are significant differences. In terms of the similarities, our national CEO, if you want to look at it like that, is the Prime Minister and it is the Prime Minister who in conjunction with the Cabinet who acts like our National Board of Directors and who sets policy and direction for our nation’s business. Those of us who are in the Legislature are entrusted by the people of Belize whether through election or through appointment, for being here to represent the shareholders of this national enterprise that is Belize. And make no mistake about it, Madam President, it is not simply the business of Prime Minister Barrow. It is not simply the business of the UDP Cabinet. It is not even the business of the United Democratic Party. It is our business, all of us, each and every citizen of Belize. (Applause) It is a business that we entrust the government to run, to direct and to manage for the betterment of all of us, not just some. So, Madam President, when the budget opens up, when the cycle of the budget opens up, by the Prime Minister stating that this is the 8th budget in the cycle of UDP governance. He need to focus, Madam President, on that by saying that this is the 8th budget in this cycle of UDP governance he is immediately limiting his view to a partisan and stridently self focused evaluation. This, in fact, Madam President, is the 34th budget since Belize became independent, not the 8th budget of the UDP electoral cycle.

In the first five paragraphs of the shortest budget speech ever given by this Prime Minister, you get an unprecedented relation and recital of UDP triumphalism and the confirmation of what I would like to term the Mark King formula of feast and famine as to who come first, who come second and who comes last. (Applause) And it is a nakedly gleeful acknowledgement/confession that since the United Democratic Party has so handsomely won at the municipal poles we can now look forward or some people, not we, some people can now look forward to the stick being exchanged for the carrot. After all, as the Prime Minister says in his very budget speech, there are clear, and I quote, “There are

clear financial implications for what happened.” The example given by the Prime Minister to bear this out are that the people of Dangriga and Punta Gorda now, because they clearly did not before, have a right, because it sounds as though they had no rights before to expect immediate relief because they were not going to be given any before.

There is an entire 2 pages to start of continuing the transformation as this particular budget speech is called. And it begs the question, Madam President, what are we continuing to transform? If it is that we are continuing to transform Belize, then it has to be very clearly stated that Belize is not Barrowland. (Applause) Belize is not simply those supporters of Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow, to the exclusion of those who may not support him politically. (Applause) We cannot, Madam President, as Belizeans, support the shifting of our budgetary exercise simply because the United Democratic Party wants to reward its supporters and punish those who did not support them. (Applause) That is not the purpose of the Draft Estimates or the budget debate. We cannot be governed, Madam President, by some outrageous idea that instead of budgeting to better Belize and better the lives of all that we are being exhorted in the very justification for this budget, that we are being exhorted by the political directorate to quote, “match the political muscularity of the voters by the spending muscularity of the government”. In other words, you give me so now I will give you. No, Madam President, the government is not the United Democratic Party. It is a government for all. (Applause) And that should mean that our programs, policies, budget, and work have to be directed towards maximizing benefits for Belize based on where most needs are found, based on where the work is, based on where we are going to have maximum impact for what we are trying to do. The mistaken idea that somehow government is justified once it has become government in acting in a nakedly partisan and political manner, that mistaken idea is the reason why some who sit on the other side of this Chamber, and I specifically point out the Leader of Government Business, (Applause) pushed for changes for there to be more accountability like the Finance and Audit Reform Act, which was passed in 2005, so that no government could ever blatantly blur the political lines between itself as chief mandatory of our nation state, and itself as a political party, (Applause) and that those governing have to act on behalf of all instead of behaving like a political hunter.

On page 6 of the budget speech, the Prime Minister speaks of the unrelenting mission again, the unrelenting mission of the UDP directorate. And he says that in choosing to ignore “the oppressive orthodoxy of statistics, the political directorate is going to choose to ignore the current tropical depression facing this country, the fiscal depression, the impending hurricane season that we know for sure is coming, and will borrow, borrow, borrow to buy and give out favor after favor, one day belly full of projects and programs. And when you look at the projects and the programs, what are they, Madam President, because even though this was the shortest budget speech ever, the Prime Minister spoke about the huge rise in development expenditure to invest massively in infrastructure particularly in upgrading streets and drains in Belize City, Belmopan and all district towns. And he also spoke of providing access through the National Bank to lower cost financing for mortgage lending. And he said that all of this is part of a new compact with our citizens aimed at advancing growth increasing employment and taking Belizeans to a better place. I want you to know, Madam President, that I read this very carefully and from what I can see this massive or huge rise in development expenditure is boasted about as bulking up the capital spending and cited is an outlay of \$33 million on road rehabilitation countrywide. Well, we’d like to know how much of that was spent in Belize City allowing the Mayor of Belize City to boast that it was he that he did it. But that is \$33 million; add to that the \$11 million for Lake Independence and Chetumal Street Bridge,

add to that the supposed \$7 million in sports facilities and what you have is \$41 million, Madam President, \$41 million. Is that the way we are bulking up on development expenditure? How much of that \$33 million was spent in Belmopan City and district towns and how much in Belize City? How much of the \$7 million was spent in sporting facilities through government's special purpose BIL? I am told that in Belmopan a sporting facility was torn down and there is no replacement now. And what is worse of all, the one that I do know about which is the sporting facility in San Ignacio/Santa Elena, they hurry had to put one bleacher running all the way around because they didn't have any seating or any bleachers so they hurry one little bench all the way around the facility and when the hard rain comes you get wet because they put little slots on the side. That is the massive spending, Madam President?

And you know, we put \$20 million in the National Bank of Belize, an additional \$20 million. We still don't have any real idea about who benefited from that and for what amounts? Because we were told at the very beginning that this was not going to be used for refinancing mortgages and yet we continue to hear that mortgage refinancing is being done through this. How many teachers are benefiting, Madam President? How many public officers are benefiting from that? Certainly, one of the things that this was never meant to do but it ended up doing, because I remember it, was the big crowd that we saw at Christmas hurrying to access Christmas loans between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Is that the way we are planning to uplift the lives of Belizeans, by inducing them to borrow between \$1,000 and \$3,000 at Christmas time so they can have a little Christmas hurray and then what?

And then what, Madam President? We are told that at the deficit of \$141 million was financed by various loan sources including \$33 million from multilateral lenders and \$72 million in draw downs from Petrocaribe financing but really and truly when you look at that now, that's a bit of a fiction because if I remember correctly, we done said we draw down more than that already and where has that money gone? There is an entire treaty on the issue of Petrocaribe financing that takes up a whole of two pages in the Prime Minister's shortest budget speech ever and then there is a little chart on one of those pages that tells us where the money went. Well, it seems you know, Madam President, that it wasn't really \$72 million that we drew down, because if you go with me to page 9 the total that we have there is \$126 million, not \$72 million, of which \$30 million was equity in the National Bank of Belize; upgrading and rehabilitation of streets in district towns was \$25,000; upgrading and rehabilitation in Belize City was \$15,000; new infrastructure in Lake I and Chetumal Street, well that one seem to be correct, \$11,000. But then you have a whopping \$13 million that was supposedly spent in social support and community assistance and where is the impact of that, Madam President? Where is the impact on that? The Government of Belize has borrowed from APBEL \$143 million but yet we don't see that money being accounted for. You can say all you like, you know, Madam President. Don't worry about this, this is cheap money. It is almost free, it is only 1%. No, it is not free. Yes we will have to pay it back, and starting this year we are going to have to find the monies to start to repay the amount that we started to draw down in 2012, and it will increase because we have continued to draw down and we are spending it in ways that really have to do more with political expediency than with bettering the lives of Belizeans. (Applause)

It is not just what is here in the budget speech and in the budget figures, Madam President, that causes us heartburn and worry but what is not here. For instance, what is not here are those cuts that have just come to us by way of a schedule to this General Revenue Appropriation Bill that we have been given. Aside and apart from the Draft Estimates that we were given, we've been given

some Schedules with some big changes. You know, it is funny, Madam President. I understand that the Attorney General has said, has gone on the record as saying that it didn't give the Chief Justice any more money because, really and truly the Chief Justice didn't ask for anymore money. Well I have news for the Chief Justice, Madam President, he is getting \$80,000 less from what I can see, because specifically the judiciary is being cut by about that sum. The already miserable sum of money that the judiciary was getting which is less than 0.8% of the budget has been cut even further. And this heading, Madam President, is by no means the only one. The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development has been cut from about \$22 million of the budget to \$6.9 million, call it \$7 million. Now, that is a cut to less than 1/3 of what it was before. The Ministry of Trade, Investment, Promotion, Private Sector Development and Consumer Protection that I was already worried about because we were spending less than \$5 million on this, is also going to get cut by about half a million dollars. I was concerned, Madam President, that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation was getting about \$10 million, a little over \$10 million, that has been cut to about half, Madam President, half. Thank you, Mr. President, it's been cut to about half of what the estimates were given to us before and I don't know, colleague Senator, maybe you can help to explain to me colleague Senator Grant, why the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology and Public Utilities has been cut to about a quarter of what it was suppose to be before.

Mr. President, everybody knows, everybody who has ever had to deal with budgets know that the reason we call it Draft Estimates is because the art of budgeting is not an exact science. So it isn't hard and fast; you have draft estimates because this is what you believe you will spend. However, if I am not mistaken and I was listening properly to Senator Lizarraga, there are certain rules and regulations that you have to follow when you are budgeting and one of those rules is that the figures have to be in relation to what you genuinely expect that you will be managing. My own research into the matter, Mr. President, has led me to believe that you have to be within 10% of the figures that you are projecting, give or take. And the problem here is, Mr. President, that you have these wild variances that occur time and again in this budget that cause you severe concern as to what is going on. There are a number of places in this budget, time and again, where instead of information that you need to be able to see if you are on the right track you get a bunch of zeros instead. I can't recall seeing a budget that has had so many gaps in terms of information. I can't recall seeing one and I will tell you something, you really know who is paying attention and who isn't paying attention, you know, Mr. President, because when you look at certain ministries where you have people who are serious-minded, and I will pay him a complement like the Leader of Government Business, you don't have these ridiculous gaps in the information. I am happy to see that, for instance, in the Ministry of Immigration there are serious key performance indicators that are filled out, and there is some idea of where the programs are going to go. That is what the budgeting exercise was designed for. But when you see these big zeros occurring in a ministry, that has to be a danger sign that either somebody is asleep at the wheel, they don't know what they are doing, or they are not paying attention. I don't see those kinds of gaps in the ministry of my colleague Senator because the colleague Senator very clearly, knows very well, that we are all expected to scrutinize this budget and to make sure the work that we are paying for is actually occurring. I wish I could pay the same complement to some of the other line ministries that are here.

Mr. President, when we look at some of these ministries, and I will be looking at some, my colleagues will be looking at others, it gives you a snapshot of not only the plans that are going to occur in the coming fiscal year, but in some cases you are also able to get a good idea of what's going to happen two years

forward. For instance, in the Judiciary, other than they come with something like we did today, there is going to be no increase despite the fact that everybody knows that the Judiciary is faced with some serious backlogs of work and like I have said, they get 0.8 of 1% of our budget. The Legislature, just as a snapshot, gets 0.2 of 1% of the budget. And yet when you look at heading that is the legislature it makes it very clear that it isn't just the work of those of us who are law makers, this has some important bodies listed under the heading including the Integrity Commission, including the Ombudsman and including the Contractor General. Well, I think my colleague; Senator Lizarraga already covered some of the big concerns with the Contractor General's work. The fact that his budget is not only stagnant but stagnating and that he will not get any budgetary support despite the fact that the Office of the Contractor General should be one of the biggest tools for the Government of Belize to be able to have quality control because the Contractor General doesn't only overlook and oversee the contracts that government enters into but the Contractor General is the person who also can flag if there have been infractions in those agreements and can actually prosecute and go after those persons if there are problems. His job or her job is to monitor, vet and investigate all public contracts and we are borrowing more and more money to get into more and more contracts, and we still expect the Contractor General with two people to be monitoring and to ensure that we get value for all of this money that we are borrowing. That doesn't make much sense, Mr. President.

When you look, for instance, at the Director of Public Prosecutions, another important job, no increase, that gets 0.2 of 1% of the budget and yet the Director of Public Prosecutions is the person who get all the lashing and the lambasting including from me, I will admit it, all the lashing and the lambasting when things don't go right in that office, when we critique and we decry the fact is a low conviction rate but yet we are expecting the Director of Public Prosecutions to do better work with no increase in budget, no increase in staffing.

The Auditor General, the Auditor General gets about the same as the Director of Public Prosecutions and yet we are expecting more and more. Today, with the papers that we received for today which I actually got over the weekend, we are just getting the report for what, 2011/2012 from the Auditor General. Yes, 2011/2012, Mr. President, and that is how we expect the Auditor General to be giving us timely reports and what's happening because of the Office of the Auditor General is one of those checks and balances on government overrun and overspending. This is something that is gospel, drummed into us by my friend, the Leader of Government Business when he was the business Senator. He drummed this into us that until and unless you have a functioning, effective Auditor General, not only are you going to continue to make the same mistakes, the mistakes will pile up and get deeper and higher and higher and will get more and more into trouble. And yet, the Office of the Auditor General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, together, if you put their money together, they get less of a budget than the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, less.

Mr. President, when you look at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, this is the government ministry that gets the biggest share of the budget. This is the biggest proportion of the monies that are spent and it actually is about twice what we spend, for instance, in the Ministry of National Security and it is even more than the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. And that ministry is responsible for the fiscal management and performance of this country. It is getting more money than it has gotten in some previous years, but not more than what was actually spent last year. Because I have to draw to our attention that in 2012/2015, we projected that that ministry would need \$293,130,000 and yet it ended up spending almost \$90,374,000 than it had previously projected and now

we've taken it up to \$309 million and I don't know what the projection is going to be on that, man. There has to be some semblance as to what it is we are doing because this ministry employs so many staffers that our country should be well developed, economically, doing well, doing fabulously, because this gets the biggest share of the budget. When you look at the budget ceiling here, when you look at the programs, when you look at the spending, this should be translating into a much healthier picture and what is truly worrisome is that the key performance indicator information is totally missing, the program performance information is totally missing and the program performance information, Mr. President, is a section that is headed up achievements 2014/2015. I don't know if that they felt they had no achievements but they certainly didn't list any. They also did not list any of the key performance indicators that are supposed to be in this budget. And yet, when you look at it some things jump out at you. Grants, there is a section for grants, Mr. President, that thing for grants you know, we had budgeted in 2014/2015, \$6.5 million. We ended up actually spending a million more, \$7.5 million. Now, we are budgeting, we say, \$2.9 million, but where is the certainty to say that what we are budgeting isn't actually going to balloon into something else? Mr. President, we have to be very clear as to what it is we are doing. We have to know what it is that we are doing. Some of this you can get by looking at the various columns, for instance, under this ministry in Capital II Expenditure, Legal and Professional Advisory Services go from \$3.2 million in 2012/2013, \$9.2 million in 2013/2014 budgeted for last year \$600,000, but we ended up spending \$1.3 million. And when you look at that that actually ends up being more than what was budgeted for the Attorney General's Ministry. Imagine if we were taking all of this money and putting it into the Attorney General's Ministry where we would have the expertise necessary to deal with the issues available in House and not having to outsource it and pay costly legal fees that the taxpayers of Belize are then burdened with. Don't feel no way, you know, Mr. President, it looks like we don't really worry too much about that because we are projecting budgeting \$1 million for that this year, \$1 million for that next year and a million for that the year after. I have a feeling, Mr. President, that these are just place holders because who knows what the actual outturn and expenditure will be. Who knows what is the cost of sending private council to the CCJ because I am sure that that has not yet been reflected here. We need to have the necessary expertise in house, that is very important, that is critically important. That is something, Mr. President, that you expect to see here.

I turn the page over to page 64, this is where it starts to get scary. Apparently we didn't spend any money on Personal Emoluments in 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015, no money, zero. Zero for Personal Emoluments including salaries, zero for travel and subsistence, zero for materials and supplies, zero for operating costs, zero for maintenance costs. What is this nonsense, Mr. President? How can anybody believe, and, oh, by the way, just let me remind us, Mr. President, let me remind us that this is the Ministry of Finance and they are claiming to us that fiscal policy and budget management, they spent zero, Zero. Nothing at all, nothing, but yet, Mr. President, when you look at the staffing resources for 2012 to 2013, there, were 103 people who were working for zero. In 2013/2014, hold on it gets better. In 2013/2014 there were 125 persons working for zero. In 2014/2015 we estimated 125 but actually we were able to get 129 people to work for zero dollars. Mr. President, how can you look at these figures and have certainty to them? No, man, these things are things that really bother the taxpayer because you have a hard time. You look at key performance indicators, there is none there, program performance, you don't see any. Mr. President, it is really vitally important that we are able to trust and confide in the figures that are here. It is critical and by the way, I just want you to know, nobody from the internal revenue service worked for zero their money is right there. The same with Customs and Excise. But again, the internal revenue service can't tell you what

were their achievements in 2014/2015, and cannot tell you what, if any, were their key program strategies or activities. These are things that the taxpayers of Belize have a right to know.

Economic development, economic development when you look at it has completely stopped funding BELTRAIDE. There is no money budgeted for Beltraide. And, BELTRAIDE is supposed to be the arm of government that assists investors coming into this country and helps them to actually set up as a business. And we are expecting that there should be funding for that and I am not seeing it here. I would be grateful, Mr. President, to be pointed to where that funding is if it is coming elsewhere.

Mr. President, we moving on in the budget and we move to the Ministry of Health. When we look at the sector that is the Ministry of Health, it is interesting, you know. The Ministry of Health is one of the line ministries that people of Belize most worry about. I know the people in Belmopan here because I have heard enough of them say that they are so worried and concerned about the hospital here in Belmopan because that hospital sometimes don't even have Ventolin to give your children. Sometimes all they can give you is Ibuprofen. Sometimes they turn you back and sometime they tell you to go to the pharmacy to buy your own medicine. It is a concern and yet we see here that under contracts and consultancies there is budgeted for this year, \$19 million for payments to contractors. Is that the NHI, Mr. President? What does that consist of? When you scroll down and you look at grants, \$23 million worth of grants is budgeted of which the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital gets \$22 million? Where is the budgeting for the Regional Hospitals? Where is the budgeting to take care of the country's other needed medical care facilities? When you flip the page over in Capital II Expenditure you see that the government contribution to NHI is blank. We don't know how much they will put in but I can tell you that in the three previous years before, last year it was zero, but this time they no even put zero they put blank. What does that mean, Mr. President, what does it mean? Where are we expecting that these things will be fixed and taken care of? Where is the boasted expenditure that will improve the lives of Belizeans in this? When you look at primary care services, the budget for that, Mr. President, the total recurrent expenditure is what takes up so much of what is going on. We have supposedly 90 people dealing with primary health care services and yet the expenditure for that takes up in terms of salaries supposedly \$2 million of which salaries is \$1.7 and then there is allowances that takes up another little amount, wages for unestablished staff and a paltry little amount for social security, that doesn't seem to match the stuff that we have. And yet contracts and consultancies are listed there, payments to contractors goes from \$3,000 and something last year, to zero. But there is still an amount that is there that is left blank and you don't know what it is going to be, and then there are grants that go from \$21,000 to less than \$9,000 and then it is projected again \$21,000, \$21,000, \$21,000. Where are those grants going?

When you look at hospital services, Mr. President, hospital services the personal emoluments for this year budgeted is \$36 million. And when you look at overtime we can't even, we have salaries that run about \$25 million, and then there are other amounts budgeted there and then overtime is \$2 million. Sorry, maybe I better take out my glasses, yes, because I am seeing these figures wrong, \$2.5 million. When you look at that amount and you look at the number of staff that we have maybe the time has come, Mr. President, instead of paying costly overtime to let us look at what the burden is on the staff and to have people as established staff rather than to have non establishment of around 550 people, put some of those people on staff, stop paying the amount on overtime and maybe we would able to get better services coming out of the people who are working there.

I see, Mr. President, here so little in terms of training for the people and I see in this budget for health, so little in terms of improvement.

When we go, Mr. President, from there to education, that education budget as I mentioned includes a bunch of things. There is the National Library Service, Mr. President. National Library Service, Program Expenditure Summary, apparently we are budgeting \$2.7 million for the National Library Service, so why is the National Library Service in the Official Charities Fund eating up money that should be going to other entities that are genuine charities? There is no explanation there, there is no rationalization. Youth Support Services, we are budgeting an increased amount than we did the last year. We are budgeting \$3.3 million and yet there are several heads in the Charities Fund that were getting more monies than these for. Sports development, because after all, this is the Ministry of Sports budgeting \$1.3 million for sports development of which there is recurrent expenditure of \$1.3 million and zero for Capital II and Capital III, zero. Zero! Maintenance of buildings under the Ministry of Education, \$128,000 and that's going to continue for the next three years. I don't know what kind of building you can maintain for that. How many buildings do we have? It's been seven years or eight years that, the Prime Minister said it himself that this is his eight budget cycle. How many schools have he built, Mr. President? With the increase in our population and so many children that we have, how many schools have the Government of Belize built? And yet, the Ministry of Education spent half a million dollars on telephone. With all the modern technology that we have now, and it is projected to spend more than half a million dollars this year, next year and the year after that. Not only that, it is going to spend \$4.2 million on payments to contractors and we ask where is that going? And yet, when you look at what it is going to be putting into training that is \$1.6 million. There is an amount here for course work and examination fees and scholarship and grants are only going to be budgeted \$497,000. When you look at the Capital II Expenditure all of a sudden you see a bunch of figures here. But I thought that we had put in the program expenditure that we were going to be budgeting zero. So, which one am I suppose be looking at, Mr. President? Which one am I suppose to look at? We don't have any key performance indicators that we can really look at for the Ministry of Education because they haven't bothered to fill it in. They have or rather I should say the program performance information is not there. Achievements 2014/2015, *nada*. They do put some KPI's in and this is important because when you look at the outcome indicators, it is very clear that we are failing the children of Belize. Only 60% of our children are passing math PSE. I suppose the good news there is that 80% or we say 84% because that is an estimate, it is only an estimate, 80% last year, are passing English PSE. But the percentage of sitters achieving satisfactory grades in English PSE now, when you look at that, drops all the way down to 48%. So, we are passing but it looks like we are passing at scrape dogs. For a number of our children, the percentage of sitters achieving satisfactory grades at PSE is 43%. The percentage of sitters achieving satisfactory grades in CSEC English is 63% and in Math it is even worse, 45%. And it doesn't seem as though we are making any enrose into improving any of those figures.

When we look at the staffing levels for primary and primary education it is very clear that although we are having more students in schools, we are thinking that we are going to have those students taught by the same number of teachers because there is no increase for the next three years projected in terms of staffing resources and those are figures that have held firm since 2012/2013, the same amount, not one single teacher more, 3,704 according to the ministry, for government schools. It makes you wonder sometimes if these numbers are real or of they cook them up, man. How can it be the exact same amount in all these years from 2012 until now and we are just plugging the numbers for the next two

years? The number of government owned primary schools, it's been 57 since 2013/2014 and it will remain there for the years coming. Where is the spending, Mr. President, the massive spending that is supposed to improve the social lives of our people? (Applause) Education is so important; it is so important. When you look at government owned pre-schools. Well that's a little better, it has gone from 28 to 36, but from what I can see here they are only projecting that maybe by this year we will get two more, and then the rest of the columns I won't even bother with that. They just left it blank, somebody didn't care. When you look at the number of pre-schools overall it would seem as though the partnership between church and state and/or other private schools are doing a bit better.

MR. PRESIDENT: Excuse me, Senator, you are about to exhaust your time.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: yes, Mr. President?

MR. PRESIDENT: You are about to exhaust your time.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: See, this is the problem, Mr. President.

SENATOR P. ANDREWS: Mr. President, with your permission I will grant 15 minutes of my time to the Lead Senator, if needed.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Mr. President, I will try to wrap up but here is the thing, this is all the participation we get in the budget debate. If I am not even able to go through the numbers and figures here, (Applause) what is a point of a budget debate Mr. President?

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator, you could have requested an extension of time.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: I would love an extension of time, Mr. President, and I would be ever so grateful to you to receive it. May I have an extension?

MR. PRESIDENT: You can have fifteen minutes, Senator.

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Much oblige, Mr. President. I am much oblige because I want to point out, Mr. President, that we expect to have enrolled in our schools according to this 1,500 more kids but we are not budgeting any more teachers or any more schools to receive those children, that we look at, Mr. President, the figures that we have here and in terms of secondary education, same story. From 2012 until now, the exact same number of teachers, not one more budgeted and yet, Mr. President, we say that we are pushing for our children to have better lives through education. In every year, Mr. President, we have according to these figures, enrolled 70,000 primary school children, 20,000 secondary school children and we are spending 22% of our annual budget to fail 35% of our nation's children who do not go out to secondary school. They don't, Mr. President. When you look at the figures here, if these are correct, and I have to take them at face value, the number of students benefiting from examinations financial aid program, 1,000. That is all we are worried about. That means that we are helping, if these figures are correct, one in every 3 children with examinations and yet this is supposed to be a centerpiece of the social program of the government.

Mr. President, I really would like to know in terms of the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, why the budget was evisorated

and the figures we are given here which obviously don't assist us at all, have gone from \$21 million to \$6.9 million. I think we need an explanation for that. When we look at, and I am going to pass over that very quickly because obviously time doesn't permit.

When you look at Tourism, I was already concerned about the \$10 million that is being budgeted this year, that's been slashed to 45 million. No explanation as to where those savings are going to be effected or what of the budget programs are going to be cut; what is not going to happen, what we are not going to do and when I look at cultural history and culture (NICH) has a staff of 150 people, all of whom are statutory appointments but have no achievements, no key performance indicators, and if I remember correctly, we were struggling to find the sums of money that would be budgeted here, you see it \$2.5 million. But since the budget has been cut overall, maybe this is one of the figures that is going to be affected. It is really important for us to be able to know because we don't know. Their budget ceiling has been cut in half. And just for example, Mr. President, when you are looking right now to see what's happening in our tourism, it is clear that what we are posting off are the achievements of previous years and not what is actually happening now on the ground. The same can be said of the Ministry of Energy which got cut from \$9.2 million to \$2 million. Where and why was that cut done? For what effect?

The Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, Mr. President. I note and I am happy to see it there that there is some Capital Expenditure planned for Golden Haven Rest Home. I believe that that was one of the entities on the Charities Fund. Now, I don't know if we treat them as a charity for purposes of recurrent or what, but it is clear that this is one of these human services that we provide for. When you look at the grants section of human services, the total amount of grants is budgeted at \$5 million of which \$4.5 million is given to individuals and half a million dollars is spent on care of wards of the state. This is the section, Mr. President, where we should be budgeting for all of those things that are in the charities that really should be programs under human services. This is one of the areas where I would have expected to have been seeing an increase in allocation and budgeting, but which actually, if you look at the program expenditure summary which is contained on page 144, we are moving from \$16 million to forward budgeting of \$12 million next year and \$11 million the year after that. So that means that we are going to be cutting the services that we are giving to people under this, not increasing it.

Those are all causes for concern but the biggest criticism that has to be made of this, Mr. President, is that we continue on the one hand to say to people that we need to borrow all of this money to do our programs and yet when you start digging into the programs you are seeing cut after cut after cut which is boastered by our getting a General Appropriation Bill this morning that cuts and cuts some more. So where is the confidence, Mr. President, in any of these Draft Estimates? Where is the confidence because it is really showing to be a fiction? I was listening carefully earlier on when Senator Lizarraga was speaking to some of the anomalies and the wrong figures that were placed in here. And the worst thing of all, Mr. President, is that we don't even in this Senate have the political will to call in, call in the people responsible for the budgets of these line ministries for them to explain to us (Applause) what are the disparities here. We get one big book of budget estimates that we stay up many nights reviewing only to come here and we have another set of figures that are already changing this without telling us where it's coming out from. So I can't really tell you if we are getting less police booths or we are getting more people in Chiquibul; if we are going to build one more government school, or if we are going to put sixty kids in a classroom with a teacher instead of 45. And yet we are expected to be a check and

balance on the way government spends. And we won't get anything from the Auditor General until three or four years from now, but don't worry about it because the Prime Minister has already served us notice that he is going to come with a supplementary budget in a few months. Mr. President, if this was a real business, if this was an actual business, we fire this CEO long time. (Applause) The CEO may not have been the one to prepare the Draft Estimates, but if it is under his watch and the watch of his executive that this has been presented to this House in this way by the chief mandatory himself and therefore, the buck stops, the proverbial buck stops with the Prime Minister. (Applause) This budget, Mr. President, will not do what it says it is supposed to do, but yet we are being told, don't worry about it more borrowing is coming. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR J. GRANT (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology and Public Utilities): Good afternoon, Mr. President. I would like to make a few comments on the General Revenue Appropriation Bill. I would like to start by saying that it's clear that the Belizean people have stated loudly and clearly that they want this transformation to continue. To stop the capital expenditures at this time would be to get a contraction of the growth trajectory that we are now seeing and that, of course, is unacceptable to all. The people are happy, our people are happy with the transformation and the transformation will continue. This UDP Government is always seeking ways to reduce cost and increase revenue collection. There have been successes but this is an ongoing exercise and this government is committed to this part. Government must upgrade the infrastructure in the country. And if you study history and you have read what has been done in other countries you know that this is one of the most important businesses of a government. When you have the infrastructure then businesses are attracted and small and medium size enterprises which are the engine of growth for the country and the creator of jobs will come.

I also would like to point out that the 2015/2016 estimates make provision for this UDP Administration to continue its unprecedented investment in infrastructure, education, health and national security and taking together will continue the transformation that is now the hallmark and mainstay of this UDP Government. While we would all ask for more money and projects, what we see is the investments in the most important areas: infrastructure, education, health, poverty alleviation and creating a social net for those most vulnerable. These are the areas that will reap the greatest return on our investment. At the end of the day, Mr. President, all of these investments seek to improve both the quality of life and the economic prosperity of our people.

Mr. President, while it is easy to point fingers about the forecasted GDP prospects, which is between 2% and 2.5% of GDP this year, it is prudent to point out that we have surpassed the Central Banks forecast as recent as 2014/2015. Indeed, we saw a 3.5% growth when the Central Bank had forecasted 3%. Make no mistake, Mr. President, the investment in improved infrastructure, roads, highways, sugar roads, cemented streets, drainage, bridges, will have a significant impact on economic growth for years to come, and will continue to provide a boost in our economy and will result in savings to the Belizean people.

As we look forward, Mr. President, it is sometimes useful to look at how far we have come. In 2007, under the PUP Administration, the Central Bank indicated the GDP growth was 1.6%. In 2015, GDP growth was 3.6% better even than the expected 3.3% growth in global GDP and significantly better than the expected 0.8% GDP growth for both the European areas and a 2.4% to 2.6% for the UK, US and Canada. There were some quotations made earlier from some other people so I will quote from the President of CDB. He said, "Our strategy of using Petrocaribe investment to revamp and transform our infrastructure is

noteworthy.” And this is his exact quote, “Belize is one of the fastest growing economies in our membership. You have a strong economy, you have a very diversified economy and we like the things we are seeing happening in the Belizean economy.” (Applause) This is from the President of the Caribbean Development Bank. Yet, you will hear those who refuse to believe in what they are seeing and you would think everything is bad and the sky is falling down. Not so says the Belizean people who recently elected 62 of 65 municipal seats to this administration. (Applause) The 2015/2016 GDP growth forecast of between 2% and 2.5% is consistent with the expected GDP growth of 2.4%, which the IMF says the US will see and in Latin America even less. These achievements, Mr. President, come on the heel of our recovery from one of the worst global recessions since the 1930’s. The fact that we have been able to have positive growth throughout this entire global recession is a testament to the sound fiscal policies and management of this UDP Government. Similarly, Mr. President, in 2006 under the previous administration the debt to GDP ratio was 92%, this is from statistics from the Caribbean Development Bank. Even after the infamous super bond in 2007, the debt to GDP ratio was 76.7%. Despite the massive and unparalleled investments in infrastructure is expected for 2015/2016 the debt to GDP ratio is 76%. It is no secret, Mr. President, this UDP Administration has been better stewards of the people’s money. (Applause) You can actually see and feel the investments we have made with borrowed money.

As the Minister for the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Public Utilities, you note that the revenues have fallen and we knew that because of getting less petroleum which you expect overtime when there is a fine that the revenue would decrease especially taxes and royalties. What we did not expect was the fall for price of barrel to where it is today. However, many of the projections are now saying that we expect the price could be by the 3rd to 4th quarter back up to \$80 per barrel which of course, would make the projections here much better than it now appears.

I also want to say that the National Bank of Belize is a full commercial Bank that provides comprehensive services to its clientele. The people of Belize are extremely thankful to this government for starting a bank which they can be very, very proud and where they feel very welcomed when they go to do business. Teachers and public officers are extremely happy that a special sum was put aside for them and that amount was actually air marked in less than 8 months after the bank opened. The bank is now receiving deposits and, of course, there are also reflows on a monthly basis and those monies are used as directed by the Board of Director of the bank. So let it be very clear that this is a full service bank out there to serve the people of Belize and the people of Belize are extremely happy. When we do Christmas loans or whatever new initiative is because the people of Belize have told us that this is what they want. I am proud to associate myself with the plans for the new financial year and this budget that puts people first and continues the transformation. Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR P. ANDREWS: Mr. President, I rise to make my contribution to the 2015/2016 national budget. Mr. President, I know the Senator mentioned about whenever they give out these loans at the National Bank that it is as a direct result of the Belizean public request. I don’t know what data or what information is arrived to such conclusion but I could clearly remember on all the morning shows people calling in, because it was right around the time when the sad passing away of the young man at the Chiquibull Reserve. People were calling across this country, man, left, right and center talking about the waste of the public money to be given for mortgage write-off around Christmas time. So, I don’t know what information is used when my colleague, the Senator talks about that these are as a direct result of the Belizean public. I can tell you that not from my perception or from observation.

However, Mr. President, I also want to say that I mentioned it earlier, and I will say it again, because it is of great concern to me when our Prime Minister in this very House came in here in his budget presentation and I think my colleague Lead Senator Lisa Shoman made reference to it about talking about immediate relief and assistance that would now be given to Dangriga Town Council and to the Punta Gorda Town Council. Here we have the CEO, the Prime Minister of our country saying because now, because these two municipalities have now joined the UDP by voting for them, now they are able to benefit from the hard taxpayers money in this country. It is a shame to even think it but it is an outright shame to verbalize those things in a democratic state as ours, Mr. President, and we cannot continue to condone where the people's money is being spent over and over with short sight vision, not for long term development but for political expediency.

Mr. President, this proposed Bill was extensively debated in the House of Representatives by my PUP colleagues. It is a budget to which the Government will be entrusted and authorized to collect and spend on behalf of us, the Belizean people and sometimes you would think as if though the UDP believe as if though it was their money that when they are charting out a national budget. They are not thinking about all Belizeans. Like what the Minister from Lake Independence said, it seems like the philosophy that have governed and guide the UDP has been UDP first, Belizeans citizens second, imagine, for a Minister, a man elected by the people to make a statement and then to have the Prime Minister too come in this House and validate those statements by saying in the same way, to all the good people of the south that now you could expect assistance from the government treasury, that now you could expect to be able to get assistance. And, Mr. President, we cannot continue to condone actions like that. Mr. President, it's the people budget, monies which the hard working Belizeans, man and woman has contribute for the development of our country. It is of utmost importance, therefore, Mr. President, that we the people's representative in the Senate ensure that what is approved is in the best interest and benefit for all Belizeans and all the Belizean people out there can be assured that on this side of the House that the PUP Senators in this House, will ensure that the budget that is being presented will not only benefit those who claim to be UDP, but we are looking for a budget that will benefit all Belizeans in this country, Mr. President. (Applause)

Like Nehemiah who wept when he saw the desecration and destruction of the wall of Jerusalem and the moral wrath and corruption that had overcome the holiest of city, Mr. President, I find myself lamenting at the sad state of affair faced by our beloved Belize. The fetters of triumphalism and political arrogance threaten our democratic institution and it's making a mockery of our rule of law, Mr. President, like Nehemiah who face great tribulations and challenge to his repeated efforts to restore the walls of Jerusalem. I find myself inspired in these troubling times of our political history to be guided with the deepest desire of our people of Belize for a better Belize, free from the devastating effects and abuse of political power that is being demonstrated over and over and over. It is even rubbed in the face of the Belizean people, Mr. President. So as much as Nehemiah succeed in restoring and protecting the wall the Holy City of Jerusalem purging out that city of the parasite who has brought it to its knees, so too is my firm conviction that the end is drawing near for those who seem to be addicted to power, those who act with impunity that comes from gross contempt for the principle of the democracy enshrined within our Constitution. These days that we are looking at today is a direct violation to our Constitution to good rule of governance. And I hope, again, that the Leader of Government Business will be able to contribute to these in a fair manner (Applause) not that I am holding my breath or have any too high expectations, Mr. President.

I participate in today's charade who's outcome is a preordain conclusion with a sense of responsibility that comes from the knowledge that at every occasion we must use to expose the farce of democracy within which we live (Applause) and the arrogance and hipocrisy excercised by those who false sense of rightenousness and authority, see no wrong in how they endorse the matters brought before us, Mr. President. I sometimes when I go home and talk with my 14-year old daughter and my 12-year old son and my wife and we sit around the table, in fact, yesterday we were talking about one of the Bills that we will debate in a while here and my kids they ask me questions, "Dad, do Belizean people actually vote for these Bills because these Bills are so wrong, and they are so blatantly visible to see how misguided they are to any democracy". and I have to explain to my kids and I try to explain to them that sometimes people are not guided by principles, or by morals, or by integrity in making decisions. But I hope to instill in my children that they must always fight for the good of our country, that they must always know when it's time to stand against injustice and this budget here, Mr. President, is one of great injustice that continues to favour only the UDP's in this country and it continues to only serve the purpose and the ego of a UDP Government to use the people money to try and ensure to win a third term in government. (Applause)

From my part, it is unavoidable that I will reject what has been brought before us in this 2015/2016 budget. We can only continue to expose the deficiencies of this 2015/2016 budget as we have done to previous one introduced by this UDP Government. And, again, our lead Senator, Lisa Shoman, did an exceptional job, Mr. President, in going through the specifics and exposing the deficiency of this budget, and I wish she was granted more time to be able to continue doing so. It is an absolute failure in holding public consultation as part of the budget preparation process, whose result could only be fundamentally different than this which has been foisted upon the people. Mr. President, where has the consultation been for this budget? Are we now under a dictatorship that just comes and impose upon the people of this country how their money will be spent. We saw earlier, in fact it's no fairytale, we saw earlier where the money is borrowed and then the money is spent, and then we come to the Belizean people asking and telling them to give us approval to approve money that we have already borrowed and spent. (Applause) So when I say that this budget has been foisted upon us without any consultation it's not mere speculation, it is one that has been demonstrated by this UDP Government over and over again, but the days are number and the abuse and the injustice must and will come to an end. It is general lack of reference frame for financial accountability, a serious and continuing gap highlighted in the IMF country report. The recurring and increased size of budget deficit covers only true unpredictable providence and happenstance. Mr. President, these deficits that continue to grow in each budget, there is no plan in how these things will be covered. Man, I think again our lead Senator said, if this budget or this country was being run as a business the CEO head would have roll long time because we cannot continue moving forward like this. (Applause) And most worrisome the accelerating growth of our national public debt, in this situation, Mr. President, we must be careful to cut through the rhetoric to find out the real impact of the budget. The proposed budget does not in any tangible, effective or sustainable manner address the daily need to reduce or eliminate poverty in this country. We could spend millions and millions of dollars and those on that side could stand upon this House and talk all the poetic words that they could, but at the end of the day over and over 43% of our people are still living in poverty in this country after billions and billions of dollars have been borrowed and after billions of dollars have been spent. How has the Belizean life improve? How has the life of any Belizean improved when over half of our population is living in poverty, are trying to live on \$5.50 a day to feed a family? This is the reality happening in this country. (Applause)

In fact, when we see some of the figures before us, this budget reflects a reduction in allocation to the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation by almost a million dollars. What is happening here? I was surprised that the Senator did not mention that her ministry got cut from \$9.3 million to \$2.3 million, but yet they have the same workforce. So it seems like it is not going to be the year of technology anymore in this country. How could we have such a drastic shift from \$9.3 million and being cut by \$7 million? I don't know what has happened in the past because when we look at the number of staff it's the same amount of staff personnel so it makes no sense except for what our lead Senator alluded to that maybe these numbers are just fabricated numbers and that is why there is no real impact to the ministry that just got cut by \$7 million. Again, those are only the conclusion that I could come to, Mr. President.

Mr. President, the government continues to boast and we see the increase of the infrastructure project across the country with temporary jobs here and there; a pantry program that provides weekly food supply to targeted individual and so on. But how, Mr. President, is this addressing the long term sustainable goal of poverty alleviation. That is the question, how are these programs addressing the sustainable long term of poverty elimination? In fact, we see more and more a strategy to embrace a dependency syndrome in our society, a system of modern day slavery where the poor remain poor with no dignity, no ambition and no future. What emerge is that the state machinery is now entirely collaborated to achieve the short term political objective of winning a third term for the United Democratic Party and I will say it again, we have a UDP Government using the people's money with one sole objective to try and win a third term of Government. (Applause) And the people are suffering because of this narrow minded foresight, Mr. President. The money is not being used for poverty reduction in any real way, not for the support so badly needed by our small farmers and agro industry entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector, nor for the programs in Education, Youth and Sports, that can transform this economy into a knowledge-based society. No, Mr. President, we are the victims of political arrogance and consequent abuse of public authority that this country has never experienced before. Coercive, corrupt and ultimately destructive to behold. This is what I see in this budget in front of us, Mr. President, a budget continued dependency for political expediency. This is how I would term this budget, continued dependency for political expediency that has been the mantra of this UDP Government, Mr. President. (Applause)

Last week, the Right Honourable Said Musa brought to our attention and he was making reference from the Prime Minister 2009 Budget Presentation where the Prime Minister stood up in this House and mentioned the debt of this country was at \$1.7 billion and today our national debt is at \$2.7 billion and that consolidated over a 27 years period. We had a debt of \$1.7 and again, that was a report from the Prime Minister Budget Presentation in 2009, that we had a debt of \$1.7 million consolidated over a time of 27 years. But yet we have a UDP that has grown our debt by a billion dollars in seven years Mr. President (Applause). The hypocrisy of this UDP Government to still even be talking about the super bond, the outright hypocrisy, I would even be shame to mention the words super bond if I was a UDP man, your government has just wrapped up a billion dollars in seven years. This is the irresponsible borrowing that continues in this country. Like the Senator for business sector mentioned, that each Belizean doesn't matter if you are a day old, you are in debt \$12,000 the minute you are born in this country. This is the type of burden that this UDP is putting upon us yet they spend our money recklessly with no plan and future development on how to benefit the Belizean people. (Applause)

Do we now better understand the failure to appoint the thirteenth Senator. We can now better understand the systematic denial of central government resource to municipalities and communities that are not politically controlled. What for them is a strategy for political control is nothing less than the action of a dictatorial regime, the making of a dictatorship in Belize eroding the hallow wall of our hard earned one democracy, Mr. President. We had many people the fore Father of our country, the Right Honourable George Cadle Price, that led this country to Independence and many more of fore fathers that fought for our democracy that this present UDP is eroding right before us. But we, on this side, Mr. President, will not remain silent, we will not remain still and see our democracy erode before our very eyes. (Applause)

And so, like Nehemiah in the time of the Bible and those parasites that saw the walls destroyed and even before us, our walls of democracy is being eroded and being crumbled, not from no power from outside but from a power within and that is what makes it so troubling, Mr. President, (Applause) that it is from within our country that is eroding our democratic way of life and our democratic way of living as a people. And so, Mr. President, my conscience or nothing within me could ever bring me to a place of supporting or approving a budget that has been shown to have only one objective and that is to continue a dependency system, a modern day slavery to keep our people in slavery and dependent upon the government and to serve the purpose of this UDP Government to try and show a third term. That will not be so, Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to say my statements. (Applause)

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, with your indulgence before I begin my presentation, Senator Grant pointed out that indeed that the government party won overwhelmingly at the municipal elections and I respect the demands that I indeed congratulate all the Senators. However, be that as it may, it is important to note that whilst the results of the elections favor the Government what both Senator Lizarraga, and Senator Shoman, and indeed, even Senator Davis and Reverend Senator Leslie has pointed out, that still does not detract from the fact that we have before us is a budget which leaves much to be desired and gives great cause for concern. Mr. President, with your indulgence, if I may read from my notes. Mr. President, it is said that the practice of presenting budgets and fiscal policy to Parliament was initiated by Sir Roberts Walpole in his position as Chancellor of the ex-checker of Great Britain. It was done in an attempt to restore the confidence of the public after the chaos that was unleashed by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. The South Sea Bubble Company, Mr. President, was a British joint stock company which was founded in 1711, and it was created as a public private partnership to consolidate and reduce the cost of national debt. That company, however, never realized any significant profits and it later collapsed and thereby created a financial chaos in Great Britain. Now, this certainly created great public distrust, a loss of confidence in the government. And therefore as way to restore public confidence the practice of presenting to the people government's proposed spending and raising of revenues was created. As an aside, Mr. President, Robert Walpole has the distinction of being the first and longest seventh Prime Minister of Great Britain. And I understand, Mr. President that our Prime Minister too wishes to distinguish himself to be a Walpole of sorts and to be recorded in Belizean history as a first. Well, we will see if that in fact happens.

But, Mr. President, though the practice and tradition of a budget presentation is one which is codified in law and which is a fundamental component of what is referred to as a rule of law in a democratic state. And it is indeed a practice which has found its way in our Constitution. Indeed, section 115

of the Constitution, in fact, actually sets out that. Now what, therefore, is a purpose of a budget, Mr. President, that is important for us to understand and have that as a backdrop to any proper analysis of a budget. And I stated earlier that the purpose of a budget is to put a government's proposed revenue and spending for a financial year. But, Mr. President, what we are here debating in this Appropriation Bill 2015/2016, cannot really be regarded as a true budget. Indeed the Prime Minister has signaled and stated publicly that there will be a Supplementary Budget by the middle of this year, which tell us that from the get go this really cannot be regarded as a budget, what we are debating here today, because it offends and in fact, goes contrary to the purpose and intent of what a budget is. It is also importantly and fundamentally offensive to the Constitution of Belize. Section 115 of the Constitution of Belize explains in subsection 3 the circumstances when a Supplementary Budget can arise. And that is when in a financial year such as we are about to start, the amount which is appropriated and we are here being asked to appropriate over \$1 billion. That amount which is being appropriated is insufficient and I am not quite sure if at the start proposed budget has been created, how can it be said to be insufficient. So clearly, that requirement to that circumstance would not exist for the making or the creating of a supplementary budget later on this year. Similarly, it is explained in section 115(3) of the Constitution that a supplementary budget only arises when expenditure for that purpose was not in fact appropriated.

So then we go back to what the Prime Minister had said that he never did include in the budget certain things. Now, clearly that does not mean that it is insufficient. What it means, clearly, and that is, in fact, a damning thing because what it is telling us is that the Prime Minister, is telling the good people of the southern districts of Belize is that the Prime Minister never did intend to do anything for you people. He never did expect you people to vote for him in the municipal elections. (Applause) But since you now did he will handle you all. That is a damning thing, Mr. President, because it shows the state of mind of the person who leads our country that it is only that those people who are not UDP's or who he perceives not to be with him, they get nothing. Or as Senator Lizarraga has pointed out, they get pitans. Now, we are here debating a billion dollar budget and by the Prime Minister's words and these, a billion dollars you know, by his words and deeds because it's not in the budget, he didn't included anything for the people of the southern districts of Belize. (Applause) The Prime Minister will just now scramble some monies to try to, as they say in the streets, handle the people from the south. Yet, the people of the south and all Belizeans who he would not have factored in, they still would have had to pay their fair share towards this government's crazy, wasteful and illegal spending of the people's money. The Prime Minister's words as well show that his system of patronism to UDP's and his friends and his supporters is now be institutionalized, you know, in a national budget that it is only those who support him, who he favors, they will be the beneficiaries of the proceeds and the fruits of the government. Yet it is everyone who has, who is compelled by law, you don't any choice, you have to pay tax.

Now, Mr. President, such an approach certainly would go contrary to what Sir Robert Walpole saw to advert when he formulated the concept of a budget presentation. Now, Mr. President, many speakers before me have spoken eloquently and soberly in their analysis of this budget and therefore I will confine my observation to just a few areas. I start firstly, Mr. President, with that of the Judiciary and the Legislature which is set out at page 30 and 38 of the budget estimates. At page 30 of the budget estimates the Judiciary recurrent budget is stated to be \$8,998,135. In respect of the Legislature, that is \$2,606,836 and that is to be found on page 38. So that when these two arms of government because as every student knows, there are three arms of government: the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. When these two arms of government being the

Judiciary and the Legislature, when you total their portion of the budget, it comes up to \$11,604,971. Do you know what that amounts to, Mr. President? That amounts to 0.01%. In other words, out of the billion dollars, 99.9% goes to the Executive, the government. Whilst the other two arms of government, the other two arms of the state, the Legislature and the Judiciary, get 0.01%. Why is that important, Mr. President? Because as you well know and, indeed, the students of Social Studies and History will know that it is the Judiciary and the Legislature which are important to ensure that the Executive, that government do not run rough shod over the citizens. The Legislature and again it sets out at page 38 has, as both Senator Shoman and Senator Lizarraga had said, he has some very important bodies. The Integrity Commission, the Ombudsman, the Contractor General, these are three important bodies which comes under the Legislature. Surely, it certainly would be an extreme help, an extreme assistance, to bolster in the capabilities and the efficiency in terms of performance of these bodies if more were contributed to them. Their staff could be upgraded and thereby the work, the great important work, because these bodies provide a very important work. I could imagine at times that when in government, the Executive or those in government may not see the importance of these bodies such as the Integrity Commission and the Ombudsman and the Contractor General but they are very fundamental in ensuring the upkeep of democracy in any country. (Applause) They assist in ensuring that a government, any government, not just this government, any government do not abuse its power and run rough shod over its people, which is the complaint that seems to be the case just about everyone, that this government has in its past and in present abused its authority and abused its position.

The Judiciary as well, Mr. President, is an important facet or feature of our democracy. We have the Magistrate Court, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal. These are three pillars which are there to enforce the rule of law. And what is the rule of law? The rule of law is that there are laws in the country and those laws apply to every single individual and they are there to ensure that citizens have the ability, the facility to ensure that their rights are not taken advantage of, and that the government, any government, similarly, cannot abuse its authority. So that, Mr. President, what has to be pointed out at the outset is that it has to be an extreme almost pharisaical thing for any government to have in their budget 0.01% of the national budget being allocated to the two very, very important arms of government. And the next arm, the Executive, has this massive, massive, massive as it were war chest to do as it wishes.

The next area which I wish to highlight, Mr. President, is in respect of the Attorney General's Ministry. Now, this is an important thing, Mr. President, because it is no secret. I think that just about every Belizean know and, indeed, some attorneys, private attorneys have come on the television and boast to the fact that they are in fact, very, very expensive and that they however, omit to point out that it is the people who pay that expense, who has to foot that expense. Why that is important and why this has to be brought to the nation's attention, again, is because our Constitution by section 42 states that the Attorney General's Ministry is the principal legal officer of the Government of Belize. What that means is that the Constitution tells us, you know, that you are supposed to have a ministry and indeed, an office holder, the Attorney General, who is supposed to be the one who advises the government, takes cases on behalf of the government and, in fact, this is what it said. It says that, section 42 of the Constitution, "The Attorney General shall be the principal legal adviser to the Government," and it goes further to indicate that "legal proceedings for and against the state shall be taken in the case of civil proceedings in the name of the Attorney General." So that our founders of this great country conceptualize that the Attorney General's Ministry by virtue of the persons who work within that ministry, the attorneys and their staff, they carry

on that very important work. But yet we have a situation in Belize where, and it seems to have been happening for quite some years now, where the work of the Attorney General's Ministry is outsourced, is given by certain chosen special connected private attorneys. We see at page 82 of the budget estimate, the Attorney General's staff, all the lawyers, all who work with government, it amounts to \$1,710,000. So all the lawyers who work at the Attorney General's Ministry, it only cost the Belizean people \$1,700,000 to pay them along with the entire staff. But yet in that same Attorney General's Ministry, they have a figure for what is referred to as legal services and that, again, is to be found on page 82, that accounts for \$1.5 million. Now, who these private attorneys are? No one knows. And why is it that the Attorney General's Ministry has to pay a couple of private attorneys just about the same thing that it pays for its entire staff for the entire year? (Applause) It is indeed quite mind boggling and indeed, Mr. President, this matter when I gave my first budget presentation last year, it was raised and I am sure that many others, both in this Chamber and in the House of Representatives have sought to get some clarity about this from the government. Why are you paying private lawyers so much? And indeed, this request for clarity has fallen on deaf ears, nobody has actually, in fact, responded. It is as though people don't have the right to question how their monies are being spent. You know, it would have been a different thing if the Attorney General, whoever he is, or the Prime Minister, took the monies out of their pocket and paid these lawyers. But that is not the case. It is the public, it is people, our taxpayers who have to foot these bills and no satisfactory, indeed, no response has been given as to why this type of doing business has been ongoing for so long.

You see, because, Mr. President, the very interesting this, in addition to the fact that you have the Attorney General's Ministry paying private lawyers, you also have the Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, no less, who in fact is paying private lawyers. And it is a very interesting phenomenon because this has been going on, as Senator Shoman pointed out, and in the budget estimates it shows, from 2012, there has consistently been a payment of about \$5 million to private attorneys. So 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015, that is three years so if you multiply \$5 million times three years, it is about \$15 million. And when you, in fact, look in the budget estimates, they project that they will continue in 2015/2016, 2016/2017, and 2017/2018, paying private lawyers. So it seems as though this, in fact, has become a business at the people's expense. And is a very interesting thing, Mr. President, do you know what they do? They have in each year budgeted about \$2 million but it never fails that when in fact the budget estimate for the following year is revealed and it is produced, the amount actually spent always is just a \$5 million. So that they could just simply put in the budget the \$5 million now because we all know that is, in fact, what they are going to pay out to these private lawyers. Now, doing a very rough math, Mr. President, if we use these projections it would appear that for the next three years as well another \$15 million would have been spent by the Ministry of Finance in paying private attorneys. And if you add that \$15 million which has already been paid out since 2012, that comes up to about \$30 million. That is a lot of money. That is the amount that is said to have been the cost of constructing the streets in Belize City yet you will have two or three lawyers, they by themselves would have netted \$30 million.

You see, this is what has been pointed out and highlighted in respect to value for money. I don't think anybody could justify this type of payment, not in light of the fact that you, in fact, already have a ministry which is constitutionally mandated to provide legal services for the government. It is indeed an extremely difficult thing to comprehend why this has been going on and it seems as though there will be no end in sight for this. And why, again, this is important is because when you compare last year, the amount of money the Ministry of Finance paid to

private attorneys, it was actually \$4,798,000. When you also compare the \$1,710,000 that the Attorney General's Ministry pay for legal services, when you add that together it comes up to like about \$6,534,000. You know, Mr. President, that is almost the entire budget for the Judiciary. The entire budget for the Judiciary is \$8,998,135. It certainly, whilst it is not the entire budget for the Judiciary, it certainly the exact budget for the Magistrate Courts, the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal. Can you comprehend that? It means all the Magistrates, all the Judges of the Supreme Court, all the Court of Appeal Judges and all the staff, they are paid that same amount of money that two or three lawyers get paid in one year. That has to be bordering on being criminal, Mr. President. Certainly, it is an imprudent way in which whoever, and indeed it is the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister is, discharging his responsibility as Minister of Finance.

We also see, Mr. President, in the Attorney General's Ministry they have a line item which says that you have \$1,153,680 which was budgeted last year for, I think, known as law revision and drafting services. Law revision, Mr. President, is an exercise where the government, through a law revision officer seeks to compile all the laws because as over the years indeed in each year many laws are passed and it is an important exercise because you bring together all the laws and it allows ready accessibility for citizens so a citizen could quickly just go and access all the laws of Belize. But, here is the thing, you haven't had that exercise being done since 2003, but yet you have a line item for it. It was budgeted for \$1,153,680, they didn't spend all of it but they did spend most of it, they spent about \$900,000. So the question has to be asked, where is it? Where is the work? What do we have to show for this? And, again, we see another yet again this year, it is being placed as a budgeted item, law revision and drafting services. Now you can't have law revision each year, Mr. President, so if it was done last year and whoever did it is stalling and waiting to perhaps maybe reveal it this year, they can't be paid again for it. Indeed, the laws provide that it is only to be done every ten years.

You see, Mr. President, even if one does not want to, one has to question and one has to make the comment that something terribly is wrong. Something has to terribly be wrong the way in which figures are plastered and posted and put in certain items and it doesn't make any sense. And one may say, "Oh, well a million out of a billion dollars is nothing," but it begins to add up. It begins to add up if each of these areas which have been highlighted, one begins to do a tally of them it begins to add up. And when one recalls that we have, as was pointed out earlier, borrowed in just 5 months about in excess of \$600 million. These are monies which have to be repaid. This is no time for us to be wasting money, for us to be throwing away money. It seems to be, with the greatest of respect, Leader of Government Business, the way this government is operating. Because the government seems to be flushed with money that it is just been thrown away with no regard to the consequences of that.

Mr. President, before I take my seat I will finally want to speak on the Ministry of Human Development. This is the ministry of Boot Martinez. Mr. President, Senator Shoman, our lead Senator had pointed out a very odd thing in the Ministry of Human Development. It is, in fact, Mr. President, the Ministry which distributes or is tasked to give out the most in grants, personal grants. And we find these details and it is very interesting, Mr. President, and it has been pointed out before that we note that this year the budget estimates they are skimmer as compared to the previous one. But as Senator Lizarraga pointed out, whilst it is skimmer in pages, the fat and the numbers and the burden which the Belizean people would be tasked with, hasn't been removed. It is still a billion plus dollars which the government has to source, and it is sourced from the people

through taxes; and it is sourced, as well, through borrowing. Now, Mr. President, when you compare these two and you see that there is in fact, there is vast difference in size. When one actually goes to budget estimates we begin to realize why there is a difference in size. It is because in this year's budget you don't have that much details. All the details have been taken out so that you still have the \$14 million or so which is budgeted as was last year, but the details as to how it will be spent, it is removed. That is a very interesting thing, Mr. President, because the recurrent revenue estimate for the ministry's budget last year, was \$7,099,000. This year it has been increased to \$14,745,000. So the Ministry of Human Development's budget has been increased by \$7 million. Now, what however, is lacking, because there is a increase in the actual figures, there is less detail. And it was pointing out the last year, Mr. President, I did point out last year that this free money, this grants which Ministry of Human Development seems to be tasked to give out, it was placed under the head of the Disability Service Division of the Human Development last year, and it was point out last year that that gave the impression that close to \$6 million would have been given to those persons with disabilities in Belize by way of personal grants. But as well it was pointed out this was clearly a fraudulent attempt by government to find a way to have the people's money being given out. So you know what they did this year, Mr. President, they didn't give you any information, or any details, so you can't follow the money. To use the phrase in the American Pop Culture movie, "All the Presidents Men" who cannot follow the money trail. They have budgeted at the same \$5 plus million in grants in the Human Development and this could be found at page 146. But there is, and this is important, when you go to page 146. There is, however, no listing of a cost center. Now, as I am sure, Senator Davis will know, the cost center allows, indeed, for some level of accountability so you could cross reference in fact where these monies were disbursed from. But it doesn't have any cost center so all you have is just \$5 million plus being budgeted to be given away but how or where they will be given away? It is very, very important, Mr. President, because no individual therefore, will be able to follow the money trail. How will you be able to do that?

So that even if we, the Senators in this Honourable Chamber were to feel as though there is perhaps an issue of mismanagement or corruption and we wanted to utilize our powers under section 61 of the Constitution, you would not be able to start because we clearly would not be able to formulate where we would want to look. And I am sure the Leader of Government Business would put us in our place and tell us we can't go on a fishing expedition. But this is where we are placed, Mr. President. Now, it could be an oversight, but it a glaring deficiency in the budget estimate to not include details such as that. And what that does, then, Mr. President, it leaves us with the impression that there is a deliberate attempt by the government, to not allow the Belizean public to follow how the monies are being spent. (Applause)

Finally, Mr. President, before I take my seat I want to point out a very interesting thing that emerged in the debate in the House and Senator Patrick Andrews pointed it out as well. But to me what was very interesting is the fact that it came from the mouth of the Prime Minister himself, where he said and in its usual field to try to spew and hurl insult at the Opposition, he said this, "Apart from the super bond, which by the way is 48% of the total debt stock, super bond that is cruel on you, apart from the super bond our debt stock is comprised exclusively, wholly of concessionary borrowing." The Prime Minister, he by his own words says that the super bond is only 48%. Now, as any school child would know, 48 plus 52 would make 100. So that means that therefore it is the UDP, his government which is responsible for 52% of our debt stock. Now, this is what, Mr. President, I would call a real moment of truth telling. And if ever there was a Freudian slip, this was one because the Prime Minister has confirmed to the entire

nation and the world that he has, and his government has borrowed in seven years more than the five previous governments, from 1981 to 2008. That is an astounding revelation, Mr. President. And it matters because when we discuss and debate which we will in a few, in some moments, the Petrocaribe Bill. All of those things have to be factored in because I don't want to be accused of being anticipatory so I won't go too much but to say that our debt stock at this time is an important thing for us to take into consideration with respect to this particular budget. Because, as is pointed out, the deficit in the budget, how is it to be realized, it to be realized again from loans, from borrowing. So what we are doing then is that it is in fact an artificial budget which is propped out as Senator Lizarraga had indicated with financing from borrowing with an attempt to suggest that there is no increase in tax. But similarly, as Senator Reverend Leslie has pointed out, it is quite clear for anyone who objectively and soberly looks at it must know that whilst the rise in tax or the increase in tax is being postponed today, it will necessarily have to be done at some point.

Mr. President, the government has trumpeted that it is transforming the lives of Belizeans. Now, each and every week, Mr. President, when you look in the newspaper you see this. You see pictures of homes and businesses being publicized and in the process, Mr. President, what you see to the world and what is being publicized to the world, is how the lives of Belizeans have also been transformed but they are being transformed for the worse. (Applause) Mr. President, I can't support this budget, thank you. (Applause)

SENATOR L. ALAMILLA: Good afternoon, Mr. President, and Senator Colleagues. I want to take this opportunity to clarify that in fact, my ministry has not gotten a budget cut. That in fact, if we look at the Draft Estimates I have gotten for recurrent expenses \$6.9 million versus \$6.6 million on page 103. For Capital Expenditures I have \$961,000 and Capital III Expenditures I have \$14,442,000. So there is nothing to be concerned about. My ministry has been actively raising monies. We have enough monies to carry out our activities. And I take this opportunity today to really share with everyone, with our beautiful Belize, what my ministry has been doing and what it proposes to do. The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development was formed in 2012. It is comprised of three government units, three departments and two statutory bodies. The ministry seeks to ensure that Belize achieves its vision as outlined in the Horizon 2030 National Development Framework. That is what guides my ministry's work. To this end, the ministry has positioned itself to lead and coordinate the sustainable use of Belize's natural assets. These natural assets forms the basis for the economic drivers of Belize's development: tourism and Agriculture.

Starting in 2012, the ministry has intensified actions to address three key issues. Its goal is to harmonize and modernize environmental policies and Legislation; to improve the framework for integrated spatial planning and implementation and to improve the health of environmental and natural resources in Belize. All this is aimed at contributing towards sustainable development in Belize.

In regards to Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Unit of the ministry has successfully achieved the mainstreaming of a sustainable development framework into Belize's medium term planning process. In 2014, in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Belize's National Sustainable Development Strategy was merged with the National Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. The draft growth and Sustainable Development Strategy recognizes that the two main drivers of Belize economic development are both natural resource based. The strategy outlines development approaches

that balances growth with the goals of sustainable development. This is a major achievement that puts Belize at the forefront of the global movement towards sustainable development, of which climate change is one of the most urgent development challenges. In regards to climate change my Colleague Senator Mark Lizarraga, raised concerns about climate change and the climate change unit. I want to assure him that in fact, we do have a staff; there are no the ghost running that unit. We have a staff of five very well qualified people involved in climate change.

Through partnership with the European Union, UNDP and CCCCCs, National Climate Change Office has mobilized in excess of BZ\$4 million for investment in building Belize's resilience to the impacts of climate change. Belize now has its first National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan. The policy seeks to: integrate climate change, adaptation and mitigation into key national development plans, strategy and budgeting. It aims to build climate change resilience in order to prevent, reduce, or adapt to the negative impacts of climate change on key sectors, economic activity, society and the environment through policies and strategic processes. It aims to promote capacity building and networking across all implementing agencies, in addition to securing adequate financing over the short, medium and long term periods for effective and timely adaptation and mitigation responses. It aims to capitalize on opportunities currently available through climate change negotiation processes that can also enhance development prospects of the nation. To demonstrate that the Government of Belize is committed to addressing the challenges posed by climate change, the Government of Belize has established a Protem Climate Change Office with the role of primary coordination, policy direction, oversight and guidance. The National Climate Change Office in collaboration with UNDP assess the vulnerabilities of five economic sectors: the coastal zone, the tourism sector, the fisheries sector, the agriculture sector, water and health to current and future climate change. This was done through broad base stakeholder consultation; the assessment resulted in innovative adaptation solutions and policies. For example, agriculture production is inextricably linked to climate making agriculture the most climate-sensitive sector. Therefore, the Government of Belize has developed an agriculture strategy to incorporate a mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation into the agricultural sector. A total of BZ \$150,000 was invested in this initiative. As climate change intensifies, increasing ocean acidification and thermal stress will continue to affect our coral reefs. Belize joins the network of other monitoring stations in the Caribbean by installing a Coral Reef Early Warning System. This, referred to crews, will give us a better understanding of the marine environment. The crews buoying, an estimated investment of BZ\$280,000. Is based at South Water Caye off the Stann Creek District. The crews will improve climate risk planning, management and action that addresses the impacts of climate change especially coral bleaching. With support from the Climate Change Office, the National Meteorological Office installed five weather stations for the collection and analysis if vital data. The installation of the weather station will improve early warning systems, and the ability to precast current and future climatic scenarios. Belize will also install a salt water reverse osmosis plant on Caye Caulker. The salt water reverse osmosis plant will be powered by solar panels. This pilot project is to promote the use of renewable energy source as a part of an adaptation/mitigation strategy. It also demonstrates viable adaptation to climate change by providing a reliable adequate supply of fresh water to the residents of Caye Caulker.

At the community level, the Flowers Bank Community Group is expanding its current operations, to facilitate the increased production and quality of cohune oil. This initiative will result in the expansion of the Flowers Bank Community Group, services to the commercial production of virgin cohune oil

and the production of other products such as, soap, candles and activated charcoal.

The National Climate Change Office also supported national education and training initiatives. Twelve scholarships have been awarded to public officers and civil society to pursue courses relevant to Climate Change and Sustainable Development. The Belize National Climate Change Committee middle managers and senior staff of the Government of Belize participated in training workshops in Climate Change Adaptation and Green Recovery Restructure. One hundred and twenty teachers countrywide received training to equip them for the teaching of climate change in their science curriculum. Further training was made possible for 90 primary school teachers. The Climate Change Office in collaboration with CCCCC's also conducted a Climate Change Negotiators Training and training on climate change to build national capacity for improved decision making.

One of the main overall strategies for addressing climate change in Belize is the continuing strengthening of the National Protected Areas System in regards to National Protected Areas which also falls under my ministry. The ministry has developed a draft National Protected Areas Bill that seeks to provide a comprehensive legislative framework for protected areas management. This draft Bill is under review before being tabled to Cabinet and Parliament later in 2015. The implementation of this National Protected Areas System plan has resulted in the Government of Belize obtaining BZ\$1.9 million grant from the Global Environmental Facility over the past 4 years. This sets the stage for further investment of BZ\$13.6 million for the strengthening of key biodiversity areas project in Belize. This project, better known as KBA, was launched last week Wednesday. The project will help to transform the way we manage 6 of our most important terrestrial protected areas across the country from Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve in the North, to the Chiquibul National Park on our Western border, to the Colombia River Forest Reserve in the South. A total of 48 communities adjacent to these 6 protected areas will benefit from sustainable livelihoods programs that remain one of the cornerstones of this initiative. The idea here is to demonstrate that sustainable forest management activities are compatible with increasing the benefits that communities receive from our country's natural assets. This project will also assist Belize in modernizing its protected areas legislative framework. The Forest Act, the Wildlife Protection Act and the Environmental Protection Act will be updated to reflect the current need for a harmonizing nature, culture and the sustainable livelihoods of the communities across the country.

To complement these innovations occurring within the terrestrial protected areas, the Government of Belize has also launched the Marine Conservation and Climate Adaptation Project. On March 3, 2015, this project totaling BZ\$11 million was approved by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. These resources aim to strengthen Belize's capacity to build climate resilience of the Belize Barrier Reef System. The proposed adaptation, conservation and restoration of activities of the Belize Barrier Reef System have its socio-economic significance. They provide an opportunity for maintain and potentially increasing the income level and marine resources available for an estimated 203,000 people living in the coastal areas of Belize. The project will build capacity for the most affected local communities, so that they can act as champions of the marine managed areas and of the resources upon which they depend.

The project targets the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, the Turneffe Marine Reserve and the South Water Caye Marine Reserve and their associated communities and stakeholders from Corozal Town in the North to Placencia in the

South. To address issues related to financial sustainability, the National Protected Areas System has initiated a new project entitled, “Strengthening the Financial Sustainability of National Protected Areas System”. This project represents an investment of BZ\$260,000 sourced from the OAK Foundation. The project aims to increase and diversify the level of investment needed to maintain Belize’s Protected Areas System, so that it can continue to sustain lives into the future. These initiatives implemented under the ministry’s Sustainable Development, Climate Change and National Protected Areas Program, all support the work of the ministry’s three departments: the Fisheries and Forest Departments and the Department of the Environment as these remain the bedrock of our economy.

In regards to our Fisheries Department, the lobster and conch fishery continue to be the main export products with new emerging commodities such as finfish and sea cucumber. On average, the sector has contributed BZ\$26.6 million in export earnings. In 2014, export earnings were valued at BZ\$27.4 million representing a 9% increase in earnings when compared to 2013. With lobster earnings increased by BZ\$2.4 million and 19.5% respectively, as well as the sea cucumber fishery generating BZ\$2.5 million. The sector provides direct employment to approximately 2,800 fishers with a total of approximately 15,000 Belizeans, who directly depend on the sector for their livelihoods. Deep slope fishing trials conducted in 2014, showed potential for further development. Approximately 100 fishers are dependent on this activity and with the recent use of technology, it is expected that another 50 fishers will be engaged, therefore, increasing production from 275,000 pounds to half a million pounds while reflecting \$1.5 million in export earnings by the end of 2015.

With the recent expansion of Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Belize has achieved the 20% target of marine waters under protection as prescribed by United Nation Convention on Biodiversity. This great achievement in the protection of key ecosystems further supports the productive sector, tourism and securing livelihoods for the fishing communities across Belize.

Over the last few years, the Fisheries Department in partnership with fishing communities, marine co-managers and international agencies developed a home-growing strategy to promote the sustainable harvesting of Belize’s fish stock. In 2014, this program called “Managed Access” was successfully piloted in 2 marine protected areas. In response to call from the fishing communities countrywide, the Fisheries Department is developing a framework that will enable this program to benefit fishers countrywide. The Fisheries Department has also implemented its online licensing program; this proposed licensing program will improve efficiency in issuing licenses as well as become a more effective revenue collection system for the Government of Belize.

Belize continues to work closely with UNESCO to implement a strategy on corrective measure to remove the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System from the list of sites in danger. In 2015, a team from the World Heritage Center and IUCN, visited Belize to aid the Government of Belize in developing the desired state of Conservation Reports which sets targets to be achieved in order for the World Heritage Committee to remove Belize’s World Heritage site from the list of World Heritages in danger. The Government of Belize is committed in addressing recommendations to ensure the delisting of the property from the list of World Heritage sites in danger.

The Forest Department, in partnership with the International German Investment Fund, better known as GIZ is investing in a program entitled, “Program for the Protection and Sustainable use of Selva Maya”. The project is looking at four thematic areas: Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservations,

Valuation of Timber and Non-timber Resources, Improvement of Agriculture and Livestock Production and Community Land use Planning, and Tri-national Communication, Cooperation and Governance. So far, the four-year project has granted a total of BZ\$1.5 million to both government and the NGO's. For the Forest Department, the project is providing support for the finalization of the modernized National Forest Policy. The Forest Policy aims to articulate Belize's position regarding forest management, forest conservation, timber production, community forestry and participatory forest management, and Industry, value added products, imports and exports of forest products and data collection and management. This Forest Policy will, in 2015, be complemented with an updated Forest Department Strategic Plan and the implementation of community forest initiatives. In partnership with the International German Investment Fund, the Forest Department is also in executing a regional a project in Central America and the Dominican Republic aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. With support from this project, the Forest Department will develop a national Red strategy and a Belize RED, RED meaning Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest degradation, a readiness preparation proposal which is being favourably reviewed by the World Bank. The project's investment for 2014 was \$330,000. A similar level of investment is expected in 2015 which is an estimated of \$7.6 million invested over the next few years.

The Forest Department is also implementing activities aimed at restoring sensitive and flood prone forest systems, in order to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. The total investment so is BZ\$618,000. The Forest Department, through the Global Environmental Facility is also executing a project to integrate Belize's obligation under the Convention of Biological Diversity, better known as CBD, into its national development and sectoral planning frameworks. The total investment for this project is BZ\$670,000. The Forest Department has developed formal agreements with centers that rehabilitate wildlife and re-introduce them into the wild. The Forest Department has also been working to actively improve its capacities in wildlife management. Activities undertaken in 2014, includes training of law enforcement personnel, public awareness in northern Belize and wildlife use and laws and strengthen collaboration with wildlife rehabilitation centers for avifauna and primates.

In regards to the Department of the Environment, the Department of the Environment has been a leader in promoting a clean, green Belize. A major goal for this department is to reduce pollution in order to facilitate a greater quality of life for our citizens and visitors. This department in 2014 established a water quality monitoring program and has begun to conduct air quality monitoring to ensure that pollution in Belize stays at a manageable level. The department is also strengthening this Chemical Management Program to ensure that the people of Belize are protected from harmful chemicals that contributes to environmental degradation and reduction in human health and well-being. As you have seen in media recently, the Department of the Environment has increased its monitoring of environmental legislation. It has been quick in responding to calls from the private sector, the media and the general public. In 2014, the Department of the Environment responded to three separate vessel groundings on the Belize Barrier Reef and more recently has kept the public abreast of its activities in relation to addressing the damages to the reef.

The two statutory bodies embedded within the ministry also plays a critical role in achieving the overall goals of sustainable development. One focuses on integrated planning on the coast and the other supports the National Protected Areas System. In 2014, the Coastal Zone Management Authority established its new Board of Directors. The Board is overseeing the updating of the Belize's Draft Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan. This plan promoted

economic and social development activities that are compatible with environmental sustainability. The Coastal Zone is in the process of promoting the plan and gaining support for the Government of Belize's eventual acceptance of the plan. This plan has been touted internationally as one of the best integrated coastal zone plans ever developed and is being used as a model to be replicated across the globe.

During the period of 2014 to 2015, PACT invested a total of BZ\$2.1 million in small, medium and large grants to protected areas managers' and partners across the country. PACT managed an additional BZ\$800,000 on behalf of local and regional partners; for example, the Mar Fund and Belize's Nature Conservation Foundation. PACT will seek to increase this level of investment by using its existing resources to leverage additional grant funding for Belize. Already, PACT is managing multi-million dollar grants on behalf of the ministry and Government of Belize, and an estimated \$25 million will be invested through PACT over the next 5 years.

As you can see, Mr. President, the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development is making and will continue to make great strides in moving this country forward in a manner that will secure benefits for local communities and for the people of Belize, now and in the future. Thank you.

SENATOR G. SOSA: Mr. President, I rise to make a short contribution to the General Revenue Appropriation Bill, 2015/2016. Actually I have decided to amend my presentation that I had prepared intentionally. Today, I have heard keenly how the Members of the Opposition have challenged the Appropriation Bill presented for approval today. However, I can only compare and conclude that there is a fear within the Opposition. I think out of every word there is a measure of fear about the muscularity that was exposed by the voters on the 4th of March. A challenge has been made as to the Government of Belize being drunk in power and drunk for power. But, Mr. President, I think the main issue that underlines the critique is one that I can say, in the biblical sense of Adam and Eve and the apple, the fruit never to have been eaten. The era of 1998 to 2008, there was an Adam and Eve and the PUP. And there was the apple which was the monies that were government's monies to be used for the purpose of good governance. But as every politician is advised, don't eat from the forbidden fruit. Nonetheless, the forbidden fruit seems to be the so-called loans which are now the statements of borrow, borrow, and borrow. However, the Government of Belize ever since has been in a practice of borrowing to govern on both sides of the benches. However, in the era 1998 to 2008 the apple was eaten, the forbidden fruit was taken, and how was it done? One, their type of governance was characterized by getting loans from the IFI's at commercial lending rates that were very high. They were eating of the forbidden fruit. There were loans made for specific purposes for the best interest of the Belizean people, and the development of our country and the less up to today. Nothing can be seen, and no positive statement can be said, why? Because they acted on the forbidden fruit that had poison. Their style of governance to balance their budgets use the components of taxation over taxation, fiscal year after fiscal year, and to a great extent the electorates sees taxation as a poison to society. Now, all those actions were the order of the day, every day, for the era 1998 to 2008. Having eaten of the forbidden fruit, the Belizean electorate confined the now Opposition to slide like snakes when statements are made and they need to bob and weave, to crawl like roaches and...

MR. PRESIDENT: What is the point of order?

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: On a point of order. Are we debating the budget or are we having a history lesson here? (Applause) I understand that the

feeling is always for us to get vigorous and I have no objection to that but when we start referring to people who are a part of government as roaches and snakes, where are we going with that?

MR. PRESIDENT: You can continue, Senator.

SENATOR G. SOSA: Do you see what I mean, Mr. President, and crying like babies. That is what the People's United Party has been confined to by the Belizean electorates by having to have eaten from the forbidden fruit within their period or their era of governance. If there was any form of transformation that could have been spoken of, then was how different the Right Honourable George Cadle Price led governance for this country and how transformed it was under the Musa and Fonseca Administration? Now, the Government of the United Democratic Party is also seen on this side and can also been on this side on the same story, Adam, Eve and the forbidden fruit. But we are very cognizant of it. We are very cognizant of it and our government has been borrowing, but whilst the People United Party borrowed from the IFI's at very high commercial rates. The Government of the United Democratic Party since 2008, for seven years has not borrowed at any commercial rate that is high and unacceptable to the kind and size of the economy that Belize experiences. So in that case we have not eaten of the forbidden fruit. The Government of the United Democratic Party for half a decade, even though our budgets have been criticized, we have presented budgets with no further taxations, so in that sense we have not eaten of the forbidden fruit.

Whilst the Government of the United Democratic Party has seen it fit to use the funds of Petrocaribe in an objective manner, to transform Belize. They criticized us as of their eating of the forbidden fruit. Nonetheless a government's performance is measured by the electorate. And if I recall well, a few months ago the issue of managing governments monies had been brought to the National Assembly to this particular Chamber, and I recall very well that when it was brought it was brought to the House of Representatives, 10,000 people came in front of the National Assembly to support the performance of the Honourable Prime Minister, Dean Barrow. And id that wasn't a clear indication of political effectiveness, we just had to wait a few months more when we had the by-election in San Ignacio, another big test of government's performance in its expenditure particularly so and what did the people say? And what was the People's United Party confined to, again? So, the era of transformation is ongoing, is relentless, it's on a mission. And whilst the Opposition cries that elections are being bought, I can state here that the monies that are being spent are being spent on capital projects. The monies that are being spent are being spent on several components of real social justice and the electorate has once again shown its muscularity in favour of a government that is doing it well, a government that is doing it for the people, a government that is ear-hear for all.

It amazes me that Honourable Mark King had been criticized and it was said that the philosophy of the UDP Government is UDP first, Belizeans second and the PUP last. Mr. President, since this budget has been debated I have heard that that statement has changed and I was expecting to find out whether the Honourable Senator Andrews was going to make the mistake but he didn't, so I think is a purpose attempt to change that statement. It now says that the UDP's philosophy is UDP first, and Belizeans second. It appears that the PUP now does not exist, or are you in the Belizean people's section? I don't see that these people don't know exactly what they are doing. And I say so because I am convinced that the philosophy of the United Democratic Party is about *Belizeanism*, it is about nationalism, (Applause) it is about every Belizean including those that they called Belizean second, because I think that now in that section of Belizean section, you count the PUP's.

Mr. President, all in all when our budget is being hit as the objective of a third term budget, I ask myself and I ask all the Members here. What is the job of a politician? Isn't the job of a politician to win elections? I don't know if a politician job is that is there any politician whose job is to lose elections. But certainly, you have to know that there is a forbidden fruit that you must eat whilst you are in government. And if you are enjoying the toughness of being on the other side is because the Belizean electorates have confined you to those benches because you have eaten of the forbidden fruit.

That now leads me to speak about a few of the components or the elements that are good and are those of social justice. When a government takes the decision of paying 6 CXC's to all high school students. Mr. President, there were hundreds of students before who did not sit the CXC examinations because they could not afford it; they could simply not afford it. And now, every Belizean high school student can sit the Caribbean Examination Council test. When a government in its budget decides to allocate funds for high school subsidies, isn't it a component of social justice? Isn't that an investment, an investment in human resource?

Now, if the government decides, or when the government decided to issue free tablets to tertiary level students, why was that seem as something wrong? I don't know that what I have said are actions that indicate that we are eating of the forbidden fruit. When the government still thinks of its youth and its citizens and offers a program of WIFI in the parks. Isn't the government thinking of Belizeans all? When the Government of the United Democratic Party can take \$40 million for home construction and consumer loans through the National Bank of Belize, isn't that social justice? Or does social justice have a different definition on the other side of this Chamber? When government decides to make mortgage write-off through Social Security Board and DFC and Ministry of Housing, isn't the government thinking of the needy Belizeans? Of those that have difficulty in meeting their mortgages and are at risk of losing the only thing they may have as an asset? When the Government of Belize invests in the BOOST program in the Food Pantry, aren't we helping the needy? Isn't it investing in the Human Resource?

Mr. President, this budget is certainly commended for reacting to the confidence that the Belizean electorate expressed to this government. This budget will take Belize in the road of transformation many steps ahead, for the benefit of all Belizean. The victory at the municipal elections, 62 to 67 does not indicate, is not an indicator that we have a weak government. It is not an indicator or certainly is an indicator that the Belizean electorates trust that the Government of Belize under the stewardship of the Honourable Prime Minister Dean Barrow is one that we can accept. That is what is said by the results of the election and why should the government ignore the message sent by the Belizean electorate. The budget must reflect that, like it or not. This budget is taking this country in a direction of prosperity, of transformation and certainly, Members in this Chamber can go across the country and there is no exception. Punta Gorda Town was no exception. Dangriga was no exception. Orange Walk Town was no exception. But certainly now, that all those municipalities expressed their confidence in government's execution of his expenditures; government must in turn ensure that these municipalities continue to enjoy the programs of transformation.

Mr. President, I believe and I am a firm believer that the best political indicator is the one that the electorate uses on Election Day. The strength of democracy is not what we say, do not say or fail to do, in these Chambers of the National Assembly? But it is in the participation of the Belizean electorates, and

their expression of trust and confidence on whosoever they feel is the best of all. I support the budget 2015/2016. Thank you.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Thank you, Mr. President. As always budget debates are long. I recalled though some years ago when the budget debate lasted exactly three minutes. It was an interesting time. Mr. President, a lot has been said this afternoon so I will try to wrap this up fairly quick because we have two other Bills, but most of my colleagues and indeed all the colleagues here dealt with myriad issues political and otherwise. But there are few things that I think I need to comment on, in particular for my young new Senator, Senator Andrews. This business of the budget being specifically for UDP political purposes, I need to clarify some points. I don't know how we can say that the streets, the bridges, the drains, the sports stadium, even the Christmas chair and the Christmas loan, well let me leave the National Bank for a moment, that those things are only for the people who support the UDP. I think that across the nation, all people enjoy those improvements, they cross the bridges, they walk on the streets, and it's better. Indeed, one lady said to me, and this is a fact, I was in the south and she said to me, "Mister, I am telling you that I support the People's United Party, no question about that, because way back Mister George Price helped me get my piece of land. This is what she said to me, "but you know, for years and years and years, this street is muddy and when it rains, my kids shoes are messed up and their uniform gets dirty and I am really glad this street got cemented, man. I am really glad it got cemented." What could I say?

Mr. President, the National Bank, I didn't know that they only give out loans to people who support the UDP. I have to talk to my colleague. And I didn't know that the Christmas money that people borrowed was only UDP supporters. And, indeed, the write-offs, the write-offs was not the National Bank, I need to correct that. The write-offs were from DFC. And those write-offs, again, I don't know that those were UDP people. The write-offs were across the board, Social Security and the DFC and there is a history behind those write-offs. A lot, including senior Members of the Party who benefited from that. Indeed, I know some UDP people who didn't benefit, my wife being one of them.

So I wanted to know, because he talked about some things that I am very specific about. Mr. President, I have a ministry of nine departments, kind of the biggest in the Government. I have 749 employees in that ministry. And I want to say to you that the Office of Emergency Management in that department has never singled out UDP or PUP villages, etcetera to help. Indeed, I heard the Honourable Requena had to give us credit for moving the entire village of Jordan to hire grounds. Of course, he had to put a codicil and said, "I haven't yet built a shelter but Lord, man, remove the entire village. I promised that and we did it". There has not been a single fire victim in this country that the Office of Emergency Management hasn't given blankets and mattresses and everything and we never ask if it is UDP or PUP burn out. And, the Honourable Dolores Balderamos had to give us credit for repairing the shelter in Gales Point Mantantee that nobody had done for years. We didn't say, well, it is a PUP Representative so we won't do it. That never happened in the Office of Emergency Management. Yes it is our job but I am saying that we didn't single out, so we cannot say this budget singles out.

Let's go to the National Meteorological Service, I don't know that the weather that we do and the young people that are employed there have been selected on the basis of politics. No, they are smart young people who are trained

and we send out a scholarship, etc, so that that department stays on top of climate and meteorological information for all Belizeans.

Immigration and Nationality, indeed, this House passed or supported the passage of two Bill;, one to create the Nationality Scrutinizing Committee, and I heard at the time that, in fact, we were going to appoint who we wanted from the private sector, from the churches and from unions. Well I am proud to ask my colleagues, did I do that or did I write you and say please nominate your people which you appointed and indeed, it is cheered, the deputy from the business community cheers it. I have absolutely nothing to do now with who gets nationality or not. It goes to that committee, they are published in the gazette, and all I do is swear them in and hand the certificate. So I don't know that that can be said that that has any sort of gerrymandering or otherwise; and we've done the same thing with visas.

National Fire Service, man, outs everybody's fire. And yes, I don't know that again we decide who to out and who not to out. The department tries to do its best. There used to be a lot of criticism about their time performance, that seems to have eased down. I have great respect for my Fire Chief, Mr. Ted Smith. And notwithstanding the fact, that there were those who said that the good gentleman was a supporter of the Opposition or whatever was said, we had no problem in promoting him to Fire Chief.

The Rural Community Development Program, well please; we have expanded wells across the nation. We almost completed the river valley, nine villages, we've done Placencia, we've done the south. I heard, again, the Honourable Requena talking about Jalacte. We bored eleven holes. The problem with those is that each of them only provide a little bit of water so we are still trying to find a good water source and the same thing for Armenia Village, same thing. In fact, we are now looking in Armenia to go to Seismic and probably try to source an artisan well to solve that village problems. And it is under the representation of the Honourable Espat.

The Labour Department, we've held seminars across this country for every single municipality bar none, and Local Government, that is the famous one. I am here to tell you that every single municipality got their advance subvention; in fact, Punta Gorda got its subvention for March way back in January. It was advance subvention so much that the new council that came in March the 5, had no subvention. And that is fact, not fiction. Indeed we put a financial controller in Punta Gorda on September the 4, to help out the then Mayor, Mr. Fuentes. Not only did we do that, he could not pay Social Security and they took an indictment, a judgment against him in court which he couldn't settle and the Ministry took on paying the Social Security to date. I am coming to those, that is Punta Gorda which was supposed to be the worse that was neglected. Not only did we do that, we trained every single, look in the performance output of the budget we trained every single officer in that district. Let me finish Punta Gorda, we did three cement streets and 11 upgrades of streets and \$300,000 of drains in the Indianville area which was a predominantly PUP area long before there was an election. So, please man.

Coming to Dangriga, why do you think that your good Mayor didn't run? Because he had great difficulty with your party because of the way we treated him and he was betwixt and between. That is why Mayor Swazo didn't run, (Applause) because we treated him with dignity, with respect, he was in every single ceremony, in fact, when we sworn in, when we did all the people with the regulations all stood on the same podium shaking hands and signing the agreements.

When we talk about Orange Walk, in fact, I did say, of your three Mayors, the best performer was the Orange Walk Mayor and I will give credit where credit is due. I had no surprise that he scraped it through because he was fairly good. But we did not abandon one single municipal in this country. The Ministry of Finance and the Honourable Prime Minister provided the subvention in advance every time we requested it and that is fact not fiction. So it is not fair to say that any was abandoned.

The budget, Mr. President, and I want to just them down quickly for you. Under the Ministry of Local Government and Labour, I want to ask whether in fact, you can say that emergency management for which you are budgeting \$350,000 is a PUP budget? Whether firefighting equipment is a UDP budget? Whether contribution to village councils and every single village council had gotten the assistance across the board, bar none, there is not a single People's United Party Representative that can stand up in my face and say that the names they submitted as their representative on the water boards and so, was not sworn in. There is not a single one, not a single one whether it was the Honourable Rodwell Ferguson, the Honourable Mike Espat, the Honourable Requena, across this board we honoured the request of each and every one and that is a fact.

Rural water supply and sanitation, every village is the same, in fact, as we are speaking the village of Big Falls, and I will be down there tomorrow to see it myself. We are putting \$40,000 into a new well because the current well they have is only delivering about 12 gallons a minute which is too little for them and that is a village under the PUP Representative, man. Up north in the village of Sarteneja, brand new reverse osmosis system for \$1.25 million and, indeed, when I inaugurated it and I invited the Honourable Marin, he chose not to show. So, please don't tell me we have discriminated. That village did not have sanitation, reverse osmosis water for years.

MR. PRESIDENT: Members in the gallery please remain quiet.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Hindrance across the board, rescue equipment, the Integrated Disaster Management Program spread out across the board. So, Mr. President, I want to challenge anybody to say to me that that is not a program that benefits all the resident of those areas.

Indeed, Mr. President, I just want to point out a couple of things. I didn't hear anybody say it because I heard it in the House. Recurrent Expenditure is \$873 million while Recurrent Revenue is \$934 million so there is a surplus in recurrent of \$61 million. If you look at what the Capital II and the Capital III is, you will see that both of them, Capital II is \$97 million and Capital III is \$94 million, our total is \$92 million, so we would have a deficit of about \$130 million. We have loan repayments of \$85 million. But what is significant, Mr. President, in all the talk about what can and cannot be done is the fact, that interest payments are at \$90 million. Of that \$90 million, the domestic payment is \$15 million and the external is \$74 million. Of that external, Mr. President, a full 52, page 75 you can find it, a full \$52 million or 71% is payments for commercial loans which were garnered at high interest rates. So, a full 71% of our interest payments are coming in because of commercial loans that we got in the past at extremely high interest rates. Yes, there has been a lot of talk about borrow and spend, borrow and spent and what you put on future generations. This is on our generation and yes, the loans will be put on future generations but, Mr. President, I will tell you something, if you borrow money you project to pay it, you are confident that you

have spent the money on what you should have spent it, and you are confident that you can pay it as our percentage of debt to GDP shows then you can continue in that process. The sad thing is when you borrow and you cannot see what you did with your money and you have difficulty to pay it.

And let me remind you of some things, I need to remind of this, of that same \$53 million that we are now paying in commercial loan interest, \$52,650,210. Do you know, Mr. President, that was on a loan of US \$526 million and do you know what came out of that loan? It was \$90 million for a Mahogany Heights project that God knows you could have done for maybe \$5 million because nothing is there; literally nothing is there. (Applause) Some few private people became wealthy because we even bought a piece of land which we can't get title for so we can't give it out to the residence of that town but those people went off with the money. Who is paying the bill? The same poor people, the same people up there are paying that bill now in the form of interest, part of this \$52 million. So we privatized these sets and we nationalized the debt. We took the money and put it in the hands of a few private people and the majority of poor people are paying it back in interest. The principle hasn't start yet. The same thing happened with \$30 million to Novelo's. The other day I heard some ridiculous thing on the radio about they want to pay \$100 a month or some crazy figure and they couldn't find them so they were looking. I thought it was a joke, \$30 million. You all are paying it now. We are paying the interest on it, we haven't started paying the principal yet. There is \$9 million to Intelco, \$11 million to Western Caribbean. All of those monies went into private hands and in public, the poor hard working Belizeans are paying the interest now at commercial rates and we will be paying the principal later on and that's fact, not fiction. So, Mr. President, when we talk about these we have to remember them.

I will wrap up because the day is getting short but I want to leave you with this. This budget, Mr. President, much has been said but my two learned colleagues across there, especially the attorney, my colleague Senator Sylvestre knows that it is really *blah, blah*, because under the structure of our Constitution and how we are governed, the majority in the House has already passed the Bill. They are the ones, the whole of those 31 men and ladies who spoke for two days are the ones who stunt, they knock on your door and say, "Vote for us," And they were given the authority to tax the people and spend the people's money. We can't change a thing in the budget, whether we want it to or not, we cannot. So we've ventilated, we've discussed, we've said what we had to say, but so be it whether these 'Ayes' have it or not that budget is a done deal and that applies to all money Bills and we know that. The British set that in Motion in 1909, and confirmed it in 1949, and all of us in the Commonwealth are stuck with that whether it is Canada, Australia, India or across the board, Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad, Guyana, all of us have that same system. So we spent the last 6 hours ventilating, yes, and saying what we have and what we don't have but at the end of the day, Mr. President, whether you call the vote or not, the 'Ayes' have and this is budget for the year 2015/2016. I guess I move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate certain sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending March 31, 2016, be read a second time.

All those in favor, kindly say aye; those against kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a second time.

2. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen.

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: Mr. President, thank you. Mr. President, allow me to make some brief remarks in respect to this Bill. Mr. President, this is the second Supplementary Appropriation Bill for Fiscal Year 2014/2015. You will recall that we were just here in November of last year, and at that time Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2014/2015, was rammed down our throat. At that time the Supplementary Appropriation Bill totaled \$25,122,233 and this was sought after this Honourable Chamber had approved in March of last year to spend \$11,189,139. Now we are coming back on the government who has brazenly told us that. You know, by the way when we came here in November and we told you that we had overspent by \$25 million, really and truly there is an additional \$46 million that we had overspent. Now, Mr. President, I am not quite sure if they could have spent this money between November of last year to March, and I am trying to reason this. If the government came in November and brought a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, in the sum of \$25 plus million they are coming back. Now in March it would follow that this \$46 million or so it would seem, was spent only between November of last year, and March of this year. And clearly if that was the case even a kinder garden child would know that clearly, and obviously those monies therefore would have been spent to facilitate the government's municipal campaign. (Applause) Now, not quite sure and indeed there is no indication as to when this \$46 million was spent, but suffice it to say, if we came to this Chambers and approval was sought in a sense to have the \$25 million at the time be confirmed and ratified by way of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, if that was done at the time, it clearly meant that the government had calculated up to that point in time that is up to November of last year, how much money they had overspent. If that is not the case then it meant that government would have spent the \$46 million just between November and March. Either way, Mr. President, when you look at it, it clearly looks bad. It is either they knew that they had an additional \$46 million that they overspent, or if they didn't know they just spent it since November. Such being the case, Mr. President, what this does is that it reveals and manifests and extreme reckless spending on the part of the government and certainly the Leader of Government Business would have previously, if this was another government referred to this as fiscal imprudence because it is really a sad state of affairs that the public's money or the people's money is being spent in this scandalous way. And like it or not the government's money it is the people's money and it is the people who will have to pay back for this.

Now, Mr. President, I would just like to go through a couple of the matters for which we are told. Sessional Paper 158/1/12 has been laid on the Table and reference is made in the Appropriation Bill to this paper as Schedule. Mr. President, I would just like to go through a couple of these glearing matters which caught my attention. On page 6 of the Schedule we have for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, we have Home Improvement Grants to the tune of \$215,000. Housing Assistance which is under the item Constituency Program that is to the tune of \$652,000 and then there is a Constituency Assistant Program. In all, Mr. President, that totals \$1,275,664. Now, let me just repeat what these items are: Home Improvement Grants, Housing Assistance and Constituency

Assistance. All of this is essentially free money, monies that were given away. The Home Improvement grants were monies given away, the Housing Assistance, monies given away and the Constituency Assistance, monies given away. So, \$1,225,000 was given away stands the reason this was given away since November of last year to March, which coincidentally would coincide with the period leading up to the municipal elections. Again, if that is not the case it meant that when we came here in November they knew that they already spent this money but they didn't bring it to our attention. So again either way, Mr. President, it really looks bad, whichever way you look at it.

On that page 6 whilst \$1,275,000. Almost \$1.3 million was given away, coincidentally during the run up to an election; you have a very vital and important facility, the new conservation post in Chiquibul. That a mere apittance \$100,000 was allocated for that. Now as we well know, the issue of this conservation post in Chiquibul is a vital matter and whilst it is true that it can be said that, well at least they put something towards it, when you contrast the fact that you just gave away \$1.3 million on who, we don't know, for what purpose but there was this very important facility, this new conservation post in Chiquibul it provides a very very important posting for not only persons who manage it but for our security personnel. So that clearly, much of the monies which were given away indeed even if you took half of what was given away, half of \$1.3 million would be in the region of almost \$700,000. If you took that and you donated that to the Chiquibul post that would have gone a far way in improving that facility. (Applause) And because the government gave it away then clearly there was money to be given away but they didn't see it fit, prudent, wise to, in fact, use the money in this important respect.

Then, Mr. President, we go to page 7 under Capital III projects, Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance is said at item 1131, to have paid for the purchase of land and building, the National Bank of Belize, the sum of \$3,510,000. Now, I am quite sure the Minister responsible for National Bank certainly would not have had any dealings in these negotiations because anyone who travels to where this place is would know that it is not worth \$3,500,000. Mr. President, it is indeed scandalous that we seek to give, basically giving away, it has been said and the government and many on the government side have criticized that in the past it is said that the PUP was not fiscally prudent. Now, if ever were a case of fiscal imprudence it is this. Now, what is quite alarming as well is the fact that we have no indication as to who these monies were paid to. It is rumored and credible information that in fact, the property is that of the family of Mark Espat. And if that is the case, Mr. President, it suggests a very, very, very dangerous incestuous relationship between the government and that individual because as stated earlier, Mr. President, when one travels to where this building is on Regent Street certainly not worth \$3.5 million, so one has to wonder who appraised the building and the lot and who fixed that figure and whether the Ministry of Finance did its due diligence, and in fact, could have saved the Belizean public at least a million dollars. And again, having regard to the death which we keep racking up, this is very important and very critical.

So, Mr. President, those are matters which are quite, quite glaring and in addition to that, we see the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation as well has also undertaken it, again was allotted \$448,000 and Constituency Assistance and it overspent \$214,000. Thus, those matters, Mr. President, which I have raised, the Constituency Assistance which was overspent in the Ministry of Human Development, the almost \$1.3 million that was overspent in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in free monies that were clearly just given away, as well as the purchase of that land and building for which the National Bank will now be housed. Quick calculation reveals that that

is almost in the range of \$5 million. So \$5 million properly spent, Mr. President, would have reduced this supplementary budget, would have lessen the burden that the Belizean public has to now bear because these monies were taken, they were spent, and we are now at this tale end being told that, well you know, you the Belizean public will have to pay for this.

Those are my observations, Mr. President. Sorry, one more thing before I take my seat. I noted that in government fiscal budget estimates for 2014 at page 13, for fiscal year 2015/2016, budget estimates, we have listed as the projected outturn of expenditure for government for last year that is 2014/2015, it has listed as the projected outturn of expenditure, \$1,809,991. But, when you actually add the two supplementary budgets, that being the one which is now in this Appropriation Bill and the one which was in the previous Appropriation Bill, you have the \$25 and the \$46 million and you add it to the sums which were approved last year, \$1,011,189,000. What that gave you, that gave you a grand total of approved expenditure because we have to go by what was approved then in March of last year, what was approved in the first Supplementary Budget and what was approved now. When you total that you have \$1,082,518,060 but the projected outturn of expenditure by the government is listed as being \$1,100,000,000 a little arithmetic, you take away \$82 million from the \$100 million it leaves a difference of about \$18 million. So there seems to be like about \$18 million which somewhere or the other is just out there. Senator Hulse, perhaps, I would be grateful if you could address that because it was something that which seem to me, I don't know if there was an error. What I am referring to, I am referring to page 13 of the budget estimates. You look at the projected outturn of expenditure of the government for 2014/2015. It is \$1,100,000,000 but when you add the two supplementary budgets for last year, plus the approved budget it comes up only to \$1,082,000,000 so there is a difference of about \$18 million or thereabouts. I would be grateful if perhaps the Leader of Government Business could respond and explain why that is the case. Those are my observations at this time, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for the question Senator, I will have a look at it and see if I can explain but I won't do it now for sure. It will probably take a little time to do but thanks for highlighting it. Mr. President, this morning some of us passed a Motion dealing US \$28,776,243 from Petrocaribe for the period of September to February 2015. Whether we agree with it or not, or how it was done or not. The supplementary that my colleague just discussed actually is how that was funded. And so, what continues to happen is that the Petrocaribe Funds under the loan agreement of 2012, funds are drawn, did these various projects, the government comes to Parliament and says, "Look, this is how we spent the money. You may not agree with the spending, you think it could have been better spent or otherwise but the fact of the matter, it comes to the National Assembly as a supplementary to clearly indicate how the funds have been spent and to ask Parliament for its approval. And as I said before, you know it will get it because it went to the House and the House does the approval but I just wanted to point that out that this that just went there is not nebulous, it's that fund that this morning from the Petrocaribe was asked to approved. I ask the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending March 31, 2015, be read a second time.

All those in favor, kindly say aye; those against kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a second time.

3. Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to make special provisions for borrowing money from Alba Petrocaribe (Belize Energy) Limited; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I will be brief. I had a long presentation but it's late and I am tired and I am sure we all are. Quick comments, Mr. President, section 8 of this Bill reads. It cannot be ascertained beforehand that the finance portion that would be lent by APBEL to GOB. Well, Mr. President, it is untrue really, to say that the amount is unascertainable as GOB or any purchase of goods will tell you that we always know at the time of the acquisition of the goods or fuel in this case, being acquired what the cost would be. And when do we usually know what the cost of the goods would be, Mr. President? Well I would suggest that in most cases it's the time that you place the order. I would not expect that the government would order a product or anyone for that matter without knowing what the cost is. (Applause) That just makes common plain sense. You wouldn't want to order blindly from Venezuela fuel if you don't know if the cost is going to be \$20 a gallon. You want to know what the cost is before. So the minute you place an order you are expected to get a proforma, a quotation, right, some sort of documentation that legitimizes your order and that commits them to supply. That is how it's done in business all over the world every day, it's nothing new. So it baffles us quite frankly for us to hear that it cannot be ascertained beforehand the finance portion.

Now, I am going solely on what we have been told that there is a set percentage in the agreement that stipulates, certain percent will be financed and a certain percent will be paid for in 90 days. And I say this because the speculation is based on the fact that we have requested, I personally have requested, Mr. Leader of Government Business, the Petrocaribe Agreement from the Financial Secretary so that I can try and understand it as I think I have a right to, so that I can understand the complexities of this particular beast. I still have not gotten it. So in the meantime I go on what has been told to us in this Honourable House. So it perplexes us to say that we can order fuel and not know what the cost is going to be. That is just baffling.

Mr. President, this Bill is intended to circumvent the reporting requirements established by the Finance and Audit Reform Act of 2005, as is evident in section 3(1) of this Act. Much has been said about the work that Members of this very Senate have put into the Finance and Audit Reform Act, and other similar Acts that would lend accountability and greater transparency in the way government borrows and spend our money. It would be interesting to see how this Bill will be justified. But in effect, the Bill will have effectively removed from public scrutiny the amount of borrowing, the amount of spending and perhaps even the scrutiny or accounting of spending and how the money is spent. The Bill does nothing to address the non-disclosure of the use of these funds. This Bill will have the effect of vesting in the Cabinet, a subset of the Executive, the ultimate decision as to how funds will be spent and on what, removing all constitutional requirements among others, for Parliament to play its role in the authorization of spending, section 3. Perhaps you are right, Senator Shoman, in that we will never see, there is no need for us to ever see another Bill of this sort.

This Bill will give them the authority to borrow, deposit, spend, disbursed, without question, the monies in this account. What further baffles mean? It is that this administration ignores and suppresses any attempt to call for detailed explanation reference spending and spending policies associated with these monies. We tried to pass a Motion in this House and to give the government the opportunity to show us what it has spent Petrocaribe dollars on so that it could justify the impact that these funds are having in the particular areas. And of course, we know that the Motion was denied. The Ayes had it, Mr. President, you will recall. But yet, we are told that all the details of Petrocaribe borrowing and spending is being reported to the Venezuelan Government. Again, Mr. President, why is the Senate denied details if we are to play our role as some oversight and not just the rubberstamp that effectively we are perceived to be. If you have to give these numbers to Venezuela on a regular basis or whenever you give it Venezuela, why can't Parliament get a copy of these records? (Applause)

Mr. President, this Bill will have the ultimate effect of emasculating and rowing the Belizean public of their right through their duly elected Representatives (Applause) of having a say through parliamentary debate. You will still have your way, Leader of Government Business but at least let us continue with this farce of our having our say but you would have robbed effectively as well, the right of Parliamentarians to represent those people and to debate on how public debt is incurred and how public debt is to be repaid, occupied and used. That has been robbed today. (Applause)

Mr. President, I don't think I will add anymore for now, thank you.

SENATOR A. SYLVESTRE JR.: Mr. President, we have debated, spoken quite lengthy before on the issue of Petrocaribe, Loan and the circumstances surrounding the Genesis of the loan as well, as the fact that, initially it was characterized as not being a loan and it being some special arrangement. Be that as it may, Mr. President, it is quite clear that the government has come full circle, 360 degrees to now where in fact, it's being codified in a law, it will now be a law of the land of Belize and it is made clear that it, in fact, was a loan. And so provisions are being made now, and it is, in fact, is stated in the long title, special provisions are being made now for the borrowing of money from the Alba Petrocaribe Energy Limited. So, whilst in November the Alba Petrocaribe Limited borrowing was not a loan arrangement, it is now since the last five months, it has now murfed into a loan mysteriously or accidentally or whatever the case may be.

Now, Mr. President, a few observations. By section 2 of this Bill, we are told that, and in the side notes it says, "Authority to borrow money". Subsection 1 says, "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, or any other law to the country, it shall be lawful for the Government of Belize to borrow money from Alba Petrocaribe Limited in any amounts without the prior authorization of the National Assembly and to enter into a loan agreement with APBEL for the said purpose". It seems to me, Mr. President, that the government and those who were, in fact, doing dealings and transactions under the loan realized that, you know, the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, did apply and we should have, in fact, actually brought the matter before. So now we are told notwithstanding that. So it is an acceptance firstly, because when you use the words lawyers will tell you notwithstanding it is an admission, first it's a concession that yes this is the fact, but, notwithstanding that, this is what we want to apply. So that has to be firstly highlighted.

Then secondly, we go to subsection 2 which that says, "The money borrowed from APBEL may be kept in a special account at the Central Bank of

Belize and may be withdrawn from time to time as the need arises. Mr. President, this subsection 2, in my view, offends the Constitution of Belize in a particular section 114 of the Constitution. Section 114 of the Constitution, in fact, actually creates two ways in which monies may be borrowed and in which monies may be held. And with your indulgence if I may just read that section 114 says, “All revenues or other monies raised or received by Belize, (not being revenues or other monies payable under this constitution or any other law into some other public fund established for a special purpose) shall be paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.” The two modes in which monies borrowed, therefore, can be held is one, in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, or in a public fund so designated by a special law. Now, when you comb through this piece of legislation, there is no indication that the monies which are being received by way of the Petrocaribe Loan Agreement, there is no mention that it will be placed in a special fund. What was circuitously done is that it is said that it will be placed in a special account and it may, it is not mandatory either, but as one will know that a fund is speared from an account. You need an account to hold monies which form part of a fund. But the inverse does not necessarily operate. So that that is first and foremost what needs to be addressed that subsection 2 whilst law makers by section 68 of the Constitution can make laws but those laws must be in conformity with the Constitution but this is a law here and now, which from the get go is contrary and will be in conflict with the Constitution. Because monies which are borrowed which are being received on behalf of the people of Belize, it will not be placed in the Consolidated Revenue Fund nor would be placed in a special fund. It will be placed in the Central Bank. But that, Mr. President, is cause for concern. Why do I say that? One would have thought that when monies are in the Central Bank and indeed the Prime Minister has given this impression that everything is safe and you don't have to worry about anything.

But, Mr. President, very recently, indeed, this has been laid on the Table, the Report of the Auditor General at page 9 of her Report the Auditor General makes reference to paragraph 1.25 and this comes under the rubric “Statement of Public Debt, Detail Financial Statement Attached to the Appendix”. The Auditor General points out that the Ministry of Finance has made considerable efforts to ensure that Accountant General's Office bring to account authorized public debts. However, the audit found instances where the CSTRM, Mr. President, that is the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System. This is a system which is used to record loan payments and this is a statement managed by the Central Bank of Belize.

Now listen to this, you have the Central Bank of Belize which is supposed to manage the recording of loan payments but the records that Central Bank of Belize had did not reconcile with the Accountant General's Financial Statements. Do you know what that is saying, Mr. President, and it goes further. It says, there were instances whereby interest payments recorded by the Central Bank differed from payments recorded in the Smart Stream. In other words, payments were made out of Central Bank account and they differed from what the Smart Stream said and what Central Bank record say. It is not I saying it, it is not the People's United Party saying it, it is the Auditor General in her report. (Applause) What that suggests that this is a very, very, very serious thing. The Auditor General in certain terms is saying that something is amiss at the Central Bank. So now, we have a situation where, and by the way this was before Petrocaribe. This was prior to Petrocaribe. This was April 2011 to March 2012, so that now with Petrocaribe and all these monies, and one has to and it is clear what one is leaning from the Auditor General's Report is that monies look like they could be disbursed from Central Bank and they don't necessarily reconcile with the records. That is something extremely dangerous and risky which is why and it is important for the monies received from Petrocaribe to be properly placed in the Consolidated

Revenue Funds or the Special Funds. By being placed in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, government knows that it cannot therefore just draw down from these monies; they would have to seek approval. It would have to do that in advance such as was done in the debate on the budget, or at the appropriate time, come to the National Assembly and seek approval. But they are trying avoid all of that and from the Auditor General's Report it clearly indicates that things are not really operating quite properly at Central Bank and it only leaves one to reason therefore that that state of affairs at the Central Bank is what the government would prefer, so that they could draw down whenever they suit and whenever the need arises and when they think and deem it right. That, Mr. President, is extremely dangerous and extremely alarming and it is something which the Belizean public has to take cognizance of.

So that, this law, the mechanism which is being enshrined in law, which is proposed to be enshrined in law to allow the monies to held is not right, it is contrary to the Constitution. And I say that as well because the Constitution itself says at section 119, it tells you and it has the rubric at section 119, "Public Debt" because this will form monies that being borrowed from Petrocaribe, will form part of the public debt and what does it say. It says, "There shall be charged on the Consolidated Revenue Fund all debts charged for which Belize is liable." That clearly implies that if you will charge the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the debt it follows that the monies have to be placed in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. This is what the Constitution of Belize is saying. So that, you are having a provision in this law which is in direct contravention, direct conflict, head on collision with the Constitution of Belize.

Those, Mr. President, are reasons why, in addition to, the observations made by Senator Lizarraga, in respect to oversight capacity that will be removed or more on a legalistic perspective. These provisions which are enshrined see to circumvent the Constitution but you can't circumvent the Constitution when a law and a Constitution run head on collision that law has to take a back seat. So this is the position the government is placed in with this proposed piece of legislation. And for those reasons, Mr. President, I do not support the legislation in the form in which it is in. Thank you.

SENATOR P. ANDREWS: Mr. President, it's a sad day to be in this House. It is a day that for sure will go down in the history if our nation and trying to be an optimist, I hope that this piece of legislation will be repealed and I hope that we would see how dangerous, how unconstitutional, how contrary to the rule of law of a democratic society this piece of legislation is. I find it astonishing and almost heart breaking that the very man that championed for good governance and for reform, the very man that advocated for check and balance and transparency, the very man that led the 2006 reform to our Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Mr. President, now is the very man that is undoing the very things that he fought for, man. (Applause) I don't understand, I am not surprised because I have lost confidence long time in the UDP and I have lost confidence long time in those who while they are in opposition have brilliant ideas and they fight for reform but when they get in power they undo the very structure that they have been fighting for. And, Mr. President, I speak cautiously because I find myself now in the Opposition and I pray, by the grace of God, that if he would allow, and if the good of Belmopan would allow, when that day come I would not find myself to be a hypocrite (Applause) to the views and opinions that I now adhere to.

Mr. President, I add my voice to those who oppose this very facetious piece of legislation where the perception of unrestricted political power has engendered a new malicious arrogance in our political ruler, Mr. President. I say facetious because it is carefully calculated to say to all Belizeans, to young and

old, “we run things, put up shut up”. That is basically what the Leader of Government Business said a minute ago. It doesn’t matter what we say here. These Bills will pass and he said it a sarcastic tone, Mr. President. Man, this is what this UDP Government is saying to the entire country. I don’t care about your opinion, I don’t care that if you feel that I am removing the check and balance from good governance. It doesn’t matter, this legislation will pass. Thank God, today that we could at least debate on it because after it pass, like what our Senator for the business sector said, we won’t be able to even debate these issues because money will be borrowed, money will be spent, and no one will be able to question, no one will be able to say how the money is spent and you are telling me that I am living in a democratic society, and I am suppose to sit here and hear some sort of a justifiable reason for this reckless piece of legislation. This is a slap in the face of all right thinking Belizeans. (Applause) Here is a government, Mr. President, that is exempting itself from breaking its own law. This is what this legislation is doing. (Applause) It is a government that is passing a law to exempt itself from breaking our laws, one put in place to prevent public financial abuse, that’s what the good Senator was arguing about, about a law that would prevent public abuse and to safeguard the management of public funds. This is by all means a cynical measure which flaws the prudent popular struggle and great effort that went into getting the then government to enact the Finance and Audit (Reform) Amendment Legislation of 2005 to strengthen the management of our public finances. That was the intent of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act in 2005, Mr. President, to strengthen the oversight to make sure that government would have to come here, the Executive would have to come to this House and to tell the Belizean people that we want to borrow \$10 million, where they are borrowing it from, how they are going to spend it and where exactly it will go. (Applause) That was the intent of that legislation in 2005. And now the very man that fought for it is going to defend that that law is no longer necessary in this House. This is the atrocity of all ages that is about to happen in this House today and the Belizean people need to know what a hypocrisy is taking place here today.

Without apologies, I make my statement because I will not play with the democratic right that our fathers fought for in this country. I will not apologize because our democracy is being threatened by a government that is trying to pass laws to exempt themselves from being criminals. (Applause) It is mind bugging, Mr. President, and I must ask our government, our Leader of Government Business how he was the Chief advocate and champion of this legislation can now defend this piece of legislation here. But let me not dwell too long on the obvious human faculties that have come with the tarping of power except to council once more, those who seek power in the name of public good, that good comes only through the adherence to the principle and wave virtue of integrity in public life.

Mr. President, as I sat for two days last week and tried to hear a justifiable reason for this piece of legislation and you know, I tried but I have concluded that there is no explanation for such a legislation like this because wrong will always be wrong and in my world, in this country we still believe in absolute truth. We don’t believe in relativism where what was true in 2005, is no longer true today. (Applause) That is not the type of culture that I hope to build in this country. (Applause) We hope to live by absolute truths. So if it was true in 2005 it must be true in 2015, man. Mr. President, this piece of legislation here would be as if though your accountant of your business comes to you and tell you, “You know what I am taking your money and I will put in my own bank that I choose; and I will start to spend your money and I will spend it how I feel like; and you as the owner will have no oversight or no overview of this money.” It sounds very childlike to explain like that because no right-thinking Belizean, even for a small panades business, would allow anybody to come and tell you that now I will take your money and I will spend it as how I feel like, and you will not be able to

question how I spend it because you are supposed to trust that I will do right. This is what this UDP Government is doing to this country. They are coming and saying that we will take millions, hundreds of millions of dollars, and we will not bring it to the House. We will not tell you when we borrow it. We will not tell you how we spend it, you can't question us how we spend it because you are supposed to trust in my integrity you see. You are supposed to trust that I will spend this as how I see fit.

But history has thought us, Mr. President, that we have a Prime Minister that stood here in the House; how could somebody try to defend somebody that incriminates their own self? It was the Prime Minister that came here last week and said that now because Dangriga Town Council and the Punta Gorda Town Council voted PUP, I will immediately find money now to help them. How can you try and justify a statement like that? It is not me that said that, it was the Prime Minister's own mouth and I am supposed to trust in his good judgment to spend these millions of dollars in a fair and impartial manner, (Applause) when he has only validated the Mark King UDP philosophy, "UDP first, Belizeans citizens second and if you are PUP then, man, you are lost". Mr. President, the Leader of Government Business has already motioned to me that there is no way this piece of legislation will get repealed. There is no way. I am not disappointed, Senator, I have lost whole confidence in you many moons ago. But, as my colleague, my learned friend, has said that we still have a third branch in this country, Mr. President; we still have a third arm in this country. (Applause) Even though, they are only getting, how much Senator? Is it 0.7% of the national budget? It is 0.8%, it is half of 0.8%. Even though they are only getting half of 0.5%, we will say 0.5% of our national budget, the third arm, our Judiciary. We still believe that the violation here is not only a violation against good conscience, it is not only a violation against what is morally right and wrong. It is not only a violation against the poor and the suffering of this country; it is a violation against the Constitution of this country. It is a violation against the same Act that you fought for, Leader of Government Business. It is a violation of your very Act. And so, Mr. President, I will not be dismayed. This is one time, I always talk with my lead Senator and I tell her that these exercises sometimes are truly a farce and a charade but I find today, thank God, that there is those of us in this House that could go, not only in this House but outside of this House and educate the people of this country of the great injustice of this piece of legislation. And the very Petrocaribe money that the UDP have thought would bring them victory, will be their defeat because if this very facetious piece of legislation that is eroding the democracy and is taking away the opinion, the consent, the will of the Belizean people. And I know that the Belizean people when they fully understand what this UDP Government is doing by removing their opinion and their will or their consent as to how their money is spent and as to how that money is borrowed it will have a devastating effect and a lash back, Mr. Leader of Government Business.

Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity and, again, I close by saying that it is a sad day for our country. I weep over this country because our erosion of our democracy is not from outside, it is not some foreign power that's coming to threaten our democracy. It is our very own flesh and blood Belizeans, our very own brothers and sisters that is eroding the democracy that our fathers fought for. And this day will go down in history as a day when this UDP Government led us in the wrong direction. And I pray that God Almighty will give us wisdom and guidance how to continue fighting for this country.

In closing, Mr. President, I want to wish all my colleagues, even the Leader of Government Business a wonderful Easter break. It is a time of the year, Mr. President, where we celebrate probably one of the most pivotal points of our Christian history where our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ died to be able to deal

with the problems of sin. I want to thank and say all of our colleagues a happy resurrection break that we are taking and may God bless Belize and may we continue to prosper. (Applause)

SENATOR REV. N. LESLIE: Mr. President, I rise to speak about this Act, to make special provisions to borrow money on the Alba Petrocaribe Fund. This Bill before us has a very strong language. It says though that it being borrowed the use to finance capital projects as well as to provide social community assistance to the poor and socially marginalized and any other legitimate purpose as the government may consider fit. All well and good, it says may be used but, it always used some very strong language before that. “Notwithstanding anything contained in the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, of 2005, or any other law to the contrary, it shall be lawful for the Government of Belize to borrow money on the Alba Petrocaribe Limited”. Then it goes on, Mr. President, it says that, “No limitations shall apply to the use of the money borrowed from APBEL and it may be used to finance”. Then it says here, “It may be kept in a special account at the Central Bank of Belize”, may, again.

You know, we live in a democratic country, Mr. President, and we know that it isn't an emergency situation at this time and so I believe that this matter could have been brought to the Assembly, the House of Representatives to be discussed with a plan. These are things we'd like to do, this is the amount of money we need, sort of a plan and to lay it before the House for debate. But we are side stepping all of that. We are not allowing the democratic process to be dynamic (Applause) as it ought to be.

And you know also, Mr. President, it is very important that accounts be given of how monies are spent. A detailed report be given so accountability and transparency if of major importance in dealing with the development of the country, the finance of a country, how monies are spent, projects planning that are in the process, how much those projects will cost and then a report at the end of how monies were used. (Applause) So, Mr. President, you know I kind of regret that this matter did not come before the House for discussion for debate before. And I hope that in the future that we will avoid this kind of situation, that the democratic process in our country will not be seen as a farce but as something real, something that we are trying to keep alive in a very dynamic way in our country. Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR L. SHOMAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, it has been a long day, I know. And I am sorry but we are going to have to bear with each other for a little while longer. Mr. President, I will try to keep my voice as tempered as possible because I saw my friend, the Leader of Government Business was getting a little testy with volume. And I don't need to speak loudly to make my points, I will make them heard. Mr. President, this Act states that is to make special provisions for borrowing money from Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited, APBEL. And it recites the elements of what we have already seen, in fact, these very language was seen in the loan motion that was put to this Chamber earlier on today, including the recital that the supplies of petroleum consists under the terms of the agreements, the supplies of petroleum consists of two portions, a cash portion and a finance portion in a ration of approximately 50% each. And under the terms of the agreements, the cash portion will be payable to PDVSA by APBEL within 90 days and the finance portion would be lent by APBEL to GOB.

Now, here is the thing, Mr. President, that I listened keenly to the debate in the House last week, it became very clear that the justification for passing this Act was purportedly founded in what is said in H and I which is that the shipment of

petroleum products arrive in Belize at different times and in different quantities and it cannot be ascertained before hand and the finance portion that would be lent by APBEL to GOB. Now, that is a statement that in itself is quite fantastical because you are tying apples and I don't know, it isn't even oranges because it is not fruit, you are tying together apples and carrots. No, not carrots either because it not food we are talking about. You are lumping together two things that have nothing to do with one another, okay, nothing at all. So what you are doing is saying that the shipment of petroleum products in Belize arrive at different times and in different quantities. Yes that is true. And it cannot be ascertained beforehand the Finance portion that will be lent. Yes, that it true. However, the two statements together do not lead to any logical conclusion. (Applause) It isn't because they are going to arrive at different times you can ascertain beforehand. In truth and in fact, from the very moment that the shipment leaves, the price is already known. There is a scale I am told in the agreement that sets out clearly, what is going to be paid for, and what is going to be lent. And there is a period of time before it arrives here that you already know what that is and you can start to make the calculations and when it arrives here you already know once it is landed what is the cost and how much you will have to pay in 90 days. And my argument would be that when you talk of the borrowing, the borrowing actually occurs at the point at which you do not pay Venezuela the full price, but you remit to them a portion, and keep a portion and if you know how much you are going to pay them, then you know much you are going to keep. How can that be unknown? So faulty syllogism it has no logic. (Applause) And if this is the basis upon which we are purporting to break a law of Belize, to make a special exemption under a law of Belize and to state that it would therefore, as a result of H, be expedient to make special provisions to govern the borrowing that makes no sense.

This Bill is not necessary in order to give effect to the Energy Cooperation Agreement between Belize and Venezuela because that has been working just fine. Venezuela has been sending shipments. We have been receiving them. We have been remitting a portion and we have been keeping back a portion as a finance amount, which until recently my friend, the Leader of Government Business, called suppliers credit and not a loan. All of a sudden. We have had an epiphany, we have woken up and realized, "Oh, geez guess what? It is a loan." (Applause) And we went against our own law, it is a loan.

Would you like to know, Mr. President, what magic it as that awoke the Government of Belize to this? It is a lawsuit that was filed in order to indicate that there was wrongdoing by not coming to this Chamber to approve that borrowing, what's borrowing was done. You see, Mr. President, anytime we were going to send to Venezuela more than a certain amount of money and keep a certain amount, we should have been coming, when I say we, the Government of Belize, not the United Democratic Party Government, Senator. The Government of Belize should have been coming to the House and the Senate, to ask us to approve the fact that we were going to remit half of the portion, and retain half of the portion because that is when the borrowing occurs. And at that point it is certain and we know how much is going to be retained and how much is going to be paid. So, the underpinning, the justification for this law is not there. But let us, for argument sake, you say, "Oh well, this really is not convenient and I really don't want to come here every two minutes.", which is another issue I will deal with momentarily. But then you decide that not only are you going to allow the borrowing of any amount, any amount, from the Alba Petrocaribe Limited, any amount without the prior authorization and to enter into a loan agreement with APBEL for this purpose. Another agreement is going to be signed apparently, one that we don't know about. We don't know what it is going to say. The truth and the fact we don't know what the one in 2012 says because we've never been afforded that. so, one, we are authorizing prior, we are authorizing borrowing

without prior authorization. We are allowing the entry into a loan agreement with APBEL for that purpose. We are then going even further, for something that wasn't necessary. If all we were worried about was the uncertainty and therefore, we don't want to run here every two minutes, why is it now being set that the money may be kept in a special account at the Central Bank? why? Why can't it go into consolidated fund? There is no justification given, why? And why do you then need to put in a clause that says, "No limitation shall apply to the use of the money borrowed from APBEL." No limitations? And then, as my good friend, The Reverend Senator Leslie pointed out, it may be used to finance capital projects as well as to provide social and community assistance and any other legitimate purpose as the government may think fit. I know where this is going, you know. You will say, once the government thinks fit to spend that money, it is a legitimate purpose. That is what the argument will be. I have never heard such a cynical formulation as this. It is cynical. It is almost as cynical as what I heard my friend, the Leader of Government Business said. You all don't know we are here for five hours and we beat up our gums, but swallow it because, hey, this is going to pass and not one word is going to change so, too bad. It is almost as cynical as that, almost as cynical as that.

And then, if we were not ready enough to stamp the law in the face, we also say that without prejudice to the generality of this and notwithstanding anything contained in the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act of, oh Lord, 2015. We are now referring in a law to an Act that doesn't exist. So maybe we won't change a word but it looks like we will have to change a number here because there is an error.

The following agreement and the borrowings are hereby validated and confirmed retrospectively. Why do we need to do that? If you brought three loan motions before this Chamber after the fact, two of which you asked us to approve, two of which there was objections to and yet, it passed by majority in this Senate. One of which today, you didn't even bother to ask me for approval anymore, you were telling us the words confirm and validate, why? I'll tell you why, Mr. President, because there has been a 75 page skeleton argument filed in a legal case which instead of the government responding to in court, it is now going to take its magic wand, (Applause) its magic legislative wand and forgive itself for breaking the law. (Applause) Because I want us to be clear about what it is that we are being asked to do. I want you to know you know that if any citizen, anyone of us breaks the law, the government is not going to bring any legislation to retrospectively forgive you for what was done. If you have broken the law, you are going to be prosecuted. (Applause) When you look, Mr. President, at section 7(2) of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, 2005, which was the section that requires prior House approval, prior meaning before, meaning come and ask me before you borrow it, before government can enter into a loan arrangement in excess of \$10 million. Section 7(8) also required that within three months it had to publish in the gazette the date of the loan, the amount of the loan, the parties to the loan, the purpose for the loan, and the terms and conditions of the loan. If we did not do that, Mr. President, if that was not done, that's in breach. And section 24 of that Act says, and I quote "Any person who contravenes any provision of this Act, is guilty of an offense and is liable on summary conviction to a term of imprisonment for 2 years and a fine of \$10,000." (Applause) Is this why we are passing a legislation that goes so far and that repeats in at least three different sections notwithstanding any other law, this law is now the correct law and the good law, and if there is any conflict it goes so far as to even say in section 5. "In the event of a conflict between the provisions of this Act and any other law, the provisions of this Act shall prevail and it shall take effect retrospectively from September the 1, 2012. Retrospectively doesn't only mean retroactively, you know, it means that what you do is that you look back to an event that was wrong

and you know wave your legislative magic wand and you make it right. Why? There cannot be, Mr. President, any justification under the rubric of good governance for doing this. (Applause)

I really feel a great deal of human sympathy for my friend, the Leader of Government Business, I really feel for him because this one must really, really stick in his craw seeing that he was one of the most ardent advocates for the type of measure that was passed in the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, of 2005. He was one of those that were insistent that we pass this. Insistent, saying that this was the way to make a check and a balance so that executives could not run away with the power to borrow money and to spend that will, that there had to be some accountability and transparency and good government. I don't know, Mr. President, when my friend had an epiphany or a change of heart, or what happened. But the stated paragraphs in this Act that purport to make a right wrong, don't bear out what is being done. There is no justification except that the government wishes to arrogate unto itself, a forbidden fruit. (Applause) Here it is in its Garden of Eden and there is an entire tree of Petrocaribe apples and the government wants to pick and eat them all, every one of them (Applause) in any amount, in any amount. Be careful, colleague Senators. Be careful that when you pick of that fruit and you consume it, that you can really turn around to the people of Belize afterwards and justify to them, why you picked it? Why you ate it, and tell them afterwards how they benefited from it because after all, everyone of those forbidden fruits have to paid for. And they are not going to be paid for only by you, or me, or the President or the media, or the people in the gallery, they are going to be paid for by every man, woman and child in Belize. And yet we were not even willing to give the people of Belize the opportunity to have their Representatives discuss and debate, speak about it, opine about it, have their say, even though the majority, as I am constantly reminded by my friend and colleague, Senator Sosa, the majority will have its way and that those in Opposition will be confined to only having our say. If you are going to confine me, Mr. President, I want to at least be able to talk about it and to speak and say what is going to happen with those fruits that you have eaten in the Garden of Eden.

So, Mr. President, once again, I am going to demand a division in this House on this Bill because I want to see who is going to vote that we pass Bill and who is not. We must put ourselves on the record, as to where we were, on the day when democracy started to be eroded. (Applause) Because I will tell you this, once we start to make an exception for this one, the exceptions will come on the rest. Because once you have eaten of the fruit, that fruit in the Garden of Eden, you get to like it and enjoy it and you don't want to do away with it, and that is the worry that we have. This is only the beginning of a slippery slope. So, Mr. President, please I am asking that when we put the matter that it be put to a poll. Thank you.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, it's a long evening indeed. Let me start by saying that I am not amazed at the passion with which my young friend, and my senior friend, debate this matter, particularly because, of course, the cameras are rolling, and two because we purport to be educating the Belizean public. So maybe I am missing something. Let me say what I understand.

First of all, in 2005, the Genesis of this Finance and Audit Act aroused because there were so many loans from financial institutions, from capital markets especially, and from banks that we never even heard about that we couldn't even

determine what was the national debt because we heard some were for DFC, some were Central Bank and they were going all over the place. The idea, even though we knew, because we were not fools. And we understand in the social partners that government will have its way but the idea, and we knew that when you come to the National Assembly the government will have its way. In fact I have said to the then Prime Minister. The reason you come there is to ventilate so we hear about it.

Alba Petrocaribe, Alba, is it a bank? I am not sure. I don't think so, a financial institution? My good colleague Senator Grant, will correct me on that one. I don't know if they have to report to the Central Bank and I don't think they are a capital market. It is a vehicle set up between Venezuela and Belize to manage this agreement between Venezuela and Belize, an agreement which says to help you out Belize like every other Caribbean country, when we send fuel, pay our half, and keep the rest and pay us later at 1%, period. That's the agreement. And so to track that money, Alba Petrocaribe was set up to be the entity that imports from the Venezuelans and sells here in Belize, and then pays the half to Venezuela, back to the company it imported from, and the rest is here. Where is the rest? Is it dangling around somewhere? No, it goes to the Government of Belize at 1% for 25 years. And the Government of Belize, and if you read the Finance and Audit Act, I am convinced it didn't capture this arrangement because this arrangement is a kind of suppliers credit where you get your goods and you pay some and you pay later? But it's gone all over the place. The government came here three times and said, "Okay, from this sum we borrowed," because yes, you have to pay back. Anything you have to pay back, you can dance with the terms, you know, but at the structure of a loan comes through a lending or a financial institution, correct me Senator Grant, anytime that I am wrong, you are the banker, comes through a lending institution with terms and conditions. This one the agreement sets out the terms already, set out the agreement and the term before you got the first dollar. It says anytime you get fuel half of it you keep, and you pay us back 25 years at 1%. We have come here over and over to say, "This is how much of the money we've used and this is how we used it." We came again today, saying, "This is amount of money we put in supplementary showing how much we use, how we use it and that is what it is". Now, suddenly we hear, "Oh, you have to get the approval before". This particular special arrangement is not captured and that is the reason why we to explain it over and over and over and over.

Gentlemen, ladies of the Senate, this Honourable House has been given, just like the House of Representatives, the details of these spending. We just, a while ago, whether we like it or not, went through a supplementary saying this is how this money was spent. This is the amount we used. We went through that in November. We went through when we got the Central Bank funds put in. We went through when we had BIL put in. Lord, man, this is not like the other loans that we take from a bank and we say, "Okay, CABEI is lending us." That's a financial institution lending you on these terms, this, this, this. And to talk about where the money goes, man, it goes in the Central Bank. The Constitution tells you that it goes in the consolidated funds. Don't make it sound like this is going in some special thing where you will take out yourself. Lord, man, you know how government monies are withdrawn.

And let me get to a point that wasn't raised here but I heard it before. I don't know about my minister colleagues, you know. But I know for sure, not one of them has the authority to sign any money for government ever. I cannot even get the figures in my ministry because it is under CITO, there's an approving officer, there is a purchasing officer, there is an accounting officer. I couldn't move a dollar if I ever wanted to move it. And that is the way it is structured. All

of us know that. My colleague, Senator Davis, have been in the system forever. This is the way it works, man. No minister can't go say, "I want to get this, I want to draw this." There is a structure so when you see this come, even though you may hear the Contractor General, you have to submit, you have to get the tenders, they have to go up, that is the process. You may not agree with the figures. You may not agree that the spending should have been on these things but two things you cannot deny is that it has come here, you know about it, its right in front of us, and talk about democracy. I don't know what part of democracy is not being exercised when everybody has the fair right to debate and discuss and make their point.

And I want to send a slight warning, this House has distinguished itself over the thirteen years I am here as being a place where the debate is sober, the debate is healthy, the debate is strong, the debate is pointed, but we never get into a position where we sling things across the aisle. This is the hallmark of this upper elevated House. This is not the House in which the gallery shouts and other people sling insults, Mr. President, I would love for it to stay that way, no matter how strong the debate, how much we disagree, because we do so with strong convictions.

I, this Senator is convinced 100% that, in fact, this special arrangement did not fit under section 7, of the Finance and Audit Act. In fact, I said to the Prime Minister, in Cabinet, Prime Minister you need a special sort of legislation to deal with the Petrocaribe because it doesn't fit. It is not like we come here before we know what we are going to do, so we know we are going to fix the Western Highway, we know we are CDB loan. The agreement was made between Venezuela and Belize and said, if we didn't have a gallon of fuel this agreement had existed from 2005 under the former government and I thought at that time we were not getting a lot of fuel because ESSO did not want to import from Venezuela, it's an American company, And so we couldn't take advantage of it at that time. So a special company was set up, I think with my good friends, Mr. Duncan and Mr., I can't recall the name, my memory fails me at this moment. But anyway, and they were bringing it at Big Creek, Flores and said and it didn't amount to much. The figures are being thrown around whether it was 20 or 30, the figures were thrown around.

When PUMA took over from ESSO, PUMA agreed to source the fuel from Venezuela so the program is up and running. Of course, the Venezuelans know how much it is because Alba knows how much it is. Of course the Belizeans know how much it is because Alba knows how much it is. Of course Venezuela knows what we do with it. This is not like the monies that we have gotten from Venezuela that we found out some was not used and some was used. It knows, everybody knows. Please, man, and when you come here with the supplementary you can say no. And if you don't know, Mr. Senator, then we gave you a supplementary, we gave you a Bill. Lord, man. Mr. President, I move that question be put, and the Senator called for a division.

MR. PRESIDENT: Okay, Senator, as to the previous Bill and for the records, so we will concede. Clerk, you can administer the division.

MR. CLERK: There is a division on the Petrocaribe Loan Bill, 2015.

Senator Godwin Hulse	-	Aye	Senator Juliet
Thimbriel	-	Aye	
Senator Joy Grant	-	Aye	
Senator Charles Gibson	-	Aye	Senator Lisel
Alamilla	-	Aye	Senator Gerardo Sosa

	-	Aye	Senator	Lisa	Shoman
			-	No	
Senator Anthony Sylvestre Jr.				-	No
Senator Patrick Andrews				-	No
Lizarraga			-	No	Senator Fr. Rev. Noel Leslie
	-	No			
Senator Ray Davis				-	Abstain

MR. PRESIDENT: Senators, I will read the outcome of the division. There were six (6) Senators in favour, five (5) Senators against and one (1) abstention. So I think the ayes have it. (Applause)

III COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SENATE ON MOTION AND BILLS

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, In accordance with Standing Order 68A, the Senate will now resolved itself into the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee, a Committee of the whole Senate, to consider the Motion referred to it and, thereafter, in accordance with Standing Order 54, into the Committee of the whole Senate to consider the Bills that were read a second time.

Honourable Members, I will now take the chair as the Chairman of the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee and then as the Chairman of the whole Senate.

At this time I would ask the visitors in the galleries to please leave at this time, thanks.

(In the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee)

MR. PRESIDENT in the Chair.

1. **Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Instrument on the Establishment of the Small Island Developing States Dock (SIDS DOCK) Motion, 2015.**

Motion in its entirety agreed to.

Motion to be reported back to the Senate for adoption without amendment.

(In the Committee of the whole Senate)

MR. PRESIDENT in the Chair.

2. **General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.**

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the Senate without amendment.

3. **General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.**

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the Senate without amendment.

4. Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015.

Preamble along with Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 agreed to with minor typographical corrections.

Clauses 5 and 6 agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the Senate with amendment.

MR. PRESIDENT in the Chair.

A. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

IV MOTION

(Adoption of Motion)

1. Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Instrument on the Establishment of the Small Island Developing States Dock (SIDS DOCK) Motion, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee has met and considered the Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Instrument on the Establishment of the Small Island Developing States Dock (SIDS DOCK) Motion, 2015, and has agreed that it be returned back to the Senate for adoption.

I therefore move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Statute.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

V REPORTING AND THIRD READING OF BILLS

1. General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole Senate has considered the General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015, and passed it without amendment.

I now move that the Bill be read a third time.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate certain sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending March 31, 2016, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

2. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole Senate has considered the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2014/2015) Bill, 2015, and passed it without amendment.

I now move that the Bill be read a third time.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending March 31, 2015, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

3. Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole Senate has considered the Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015, and passed it with minor typographical corrections to section 4(1), third line where it states Act 2015, should read as Act 2005.

I now move that the Bill be read a third time.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to make special provisions for borrowing money from Alba Petrocaribe (Belize Energy) Limited; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Labour, Local Government, Rural Development, National Emergency Management and Immigration and Nationality): Mr. President, I now move that the Senate do adjourn.

MR. PRESIDENT: Before we adjourn Senators, I just wish you a safe and blessed Easter holidays; also to the Staff members of the National Assembly. Thank you.

Honourable Members, the question is that the Senate do now adjourn.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

The Senate now stands adjourned.

The Senate adjourned at 6:22 P.M. to a date to be fixed by the President.

PRESIDENT

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