First Meeting of Second Session of Thirteenth House

ANGUILLA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

7 APRIL 2026

(House Meetings)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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PRAYERS

OPENING OF SITTING AND PRAYER

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Good afternoon, everyone. I call upon the chaplain to open us with a word of prayer, please.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, Pastor, you may be seated.

OPENING PRAYER

Chaplin:

Good afternoon, everyone. Let us pray. Almighty God, we come before you with humility and reverence, asking your wisdom and guidance upon this Honourable House. Bless those who gather here—our leaders and representatives and all who serve the people of Anguilla. Grant them clarity of mind, strength of character, and integrity of heart. May they seek justice over power and truth over convenience, unity over division. Help them to listen with compassion, debate with respect, and decide with courage. Inspire them to lead at the sovereign heart, uphold them with dignity, and every citizen, protecting the valuable and building a nation marked by peace, fairness, and shared prosperity.

Bless this Parliament, O God, that its work may be honourable, just, and a vision worthy of the trust placed in it by the people. We pray this in your holy name, Amen.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Confirmation of minutes. None. Oath of allegiance to new members. None Announcements by the direction of the Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Good afternoon, honourable Members. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome each one of you back. I trust that you had a healthy and Happy Easter break and a working prorogation. I acknowledge that the Single Island Wide Electoral District Member Rogers has sent apologies. He's currently off island and I believe the honourable deputy governor is going to be late, so he sent apologies.

Are there any other apologies that I overlooked? If not, honourable Members, as you are aware, when we closed our previous session, we had indicated that we would come back on the 14th of April. However, pursuant to Standing Order 9, the Government has represented to me that in public interest requirements the House was called to meet somewhat earlier.

Being satisfied that the public interest is so required, I gave notice accordingly for today's meeting. So, I thank you for indulging the short notice. I also advise members that going forward during the months of April and May, just so we can have a note for your calendars, there is going to be a variation with respect to our May settings because the Speakers Conference is coming up.

So I think this would be an appropriate time for us to just note for the public that provided that there is government business or opposition business, this House will then adjourn to the following dates thereafter, April 14th, which was the date that we had originally intended to commence, April 28th, May 5th, and May 22nd, in so far as is required.

Of course, we can come back sooner. Unless there are any other announcements, those are the announcements that I have.

QUESTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Questions, None. Government statements and recent

developments, None.

HOUSE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Questions and I believe the answers would have been circulated to which you would have received copies. Honourable Member for Road South, you have a contribution in respect of that. You recall the questions that were led in respect of the House.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

So all the Honourable Member for Sandy Hill is asking is if the figure couldn't be withdrawn until such time that something is concrete and if questions want to, can be submitted in respect of it, that can be done. But as I recall from the record, and we have our records now, we have our transcript, we can go back to about two sittings and the questions were led. Honourable Member for Road North, you can stand and contribute to clarify the point of order, you can stand.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

I was just saying the Honourable Minister for Finance has said publicly that they referenced 5 to 6 million U.S. dollars, which is the figure that the Honourable Leader of Opposition just quoted. It might not have been in the Honourable House that it was said, but it was said by the Minister of Finance publicly at a government press conference on more than one occasion.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

If I may, Madam Speaker, the questions that were brought to this Honourable House were subsequent to the amount that was ring fenced last year. I would ask, and I have no difficulty if the Member from Island Harbour would refer to the answers that were brought in this Honourable House in terms of the figures, because that would be a more accurate and up-to-date representation of the facts.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member for Island Harbour.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Madam Speaker. That as I stated earlier, that figure has been bandied about in the public. The member did not in the House answers responses to the question. They have given a figure. It was stated for commercial reasons, etcetera, the specific number would not be given. However, in public press conferences, the Minister for Finance, Leader of Government Business and Honourable Premier did state that those were numbers, and that's where I'm getting the information,

Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

That our live is disrupted. Is it back? We may proceed. OK. Honourable Member for Island Harbour, in respect of the figure that you presented, what was the statement that you made that was objectionable? Is it that you said there was a specific figure? I can't recall, no.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Madam Speaker, I think that comparing the $10 million in support that this relief package of the capping the fuel surcharge, the removing freight and insurance from the customs duties and the other area that the government has proposed, 10 million in support. Comparing it to what the House would cost and the UK, it is a lesser figure and my statement was, where is the priority and who is being put first?

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the statement is a total misrepresentation of the facts. The reality is, the statement I said for the period of three months, this measure will cost $10 million for three months, as opposed to the purchase of a building that would cost at one figure spread over the entire lifetime of the building as long as the Government of Anguilla wishes to house it. To present a one-time purchase with a measure for three months, and we have no idea what's going to happen after the three months because of the volatile situation that currently exists. I do not think that the Member ought to be making misrepresentations in this Honourable House for the sake of trying to seek political points. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I was just experimenting with my handy AI on our Hansard to ask the AI when those questions were led. Those questions took place in the meeting of the 10th of February 2026. All I asked is when was the meeting that the London questions were posed. I think that maybe we can go back to those and what's objectionable is representing that there's a specific figure.

What I understand is that there's no specific figure. I think that we can agree that there's no specific figure. Whatever is dealt with in the public domain is another matter that you can deal with in the public domain.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

But as I recall, on the 10th of February 2026, those questions that were answered on record indicated that there was no hard and fast figure as yet. So, I will invite you to withdraw and not misrepresent that there is a figure and you can proceed with your submission. Honourable Member.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Respectfully, Madam Speaker, I did not say that this figure was said in the House and I am not presenting a figure said in the House. I am stating a figure that the Honourable Member presented to the public and Madam Speaker, this has been out there in the public domain for over two months and there has been no withdrawal or contesting this number by the Member.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

So, then I'm going to, if it's something that's not on the record, Honourable Members, both sides, we're going to, if it's not on the record, on the Hansard that I have, Honourable Member for Road South, I am going to stand down to allow you to find where it was said so that you can confirm.

So, we'll stand down for five minutes and you can confirm where it was said by the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

This House now resumes its sitting.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

While we were on break, I'll ask Miss Proctor just to share with me the record that I consulted before we proceed with whether or not the Honourable Member was able to get the information. So, in terms of the transcript, what was objected? I wanted to get the precise statement so that the point of order could be ruled on accurately and it says in the transcript at 2:54, the Honourable Dr. Webster stated, 'The 21 Fleet Street is about 16 million EC dollars and the maintenance cost,

Madam Speaker, will exceed that over time.' And that's when the point of order was raised. So, it helps to put context at the point of order. Wasn't the fact that it was used as an open figure? It was that it was stated as a statement of fact. And that's what was called objectionable. So, did you, were you able, Honourable Dr. Webster, to obtain any information to confirm that as a statement of fact?

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the time to confer. I don't have a number that is exact. However, I do know that Anguilla Focus, which is a reputable online source, did state on the 27th of January that the government has set aside US 5 to 6 million dollars to purchase property in London to house Anguilla's first permanent office in the United Kingdom.

The Anguilla United Front Government of Anguilla page, which I assume is sanctioned by the government of Anguilla, states in one paragraph: Anguilla, UK Office Anguilla House, Government is pursuing the establishment of a permanent Anguilla presence in London, not a residence, but an office hub. Funding of approximately US 5 to 6 million dollars has been allocated from budget underspend. It went on to say there, Madam Speaker, no property has yet been finalized.

However, the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance has, in press conferences and also on the radio and Rocking the Rock with Steve Seligman, stated that the 21 Fleet Street is the property that is being looked at, is owned by a barrister, and that's a property that is now going to be considered with a non-binding deposit.

The Premier at that time stated that she does not know what the hullabaloo is about. The hullabaloo is that the people of Anguilla deserve the relief, not that we need at this point in time to procure a house in London or anywhere else. Charity begins at home and that's what we should be working on.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Dr. Webster, we're only still dealing with the point of order. I haven't ruled on it as yet. That is in respect of you presenting the Anguilla Focus and you've indicated that there was an allocation, right? And then you've indicated that there were certain comments on various radio stations. But an allocation is very different from a statement of fact.

The point of order is this: you've stated the 21 Fleet Street is about 16 million and that's what's objected to, as I understand, because there is no conclusive contract or purchase which

has already been ventilated in this House. The objection is that the Honourable Member for Sandy Hill has asked that you withdraw it as a statement of fact. Perhaps you can rephrase it in another way, but it cannot be misrepresented to the public as a statement of fact. Did I capture your point of order accurately, Honourable Member for Sandy Hill?

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

That is absolutely correct, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I think we can move past it. I understand the point you're trying to make, but you cannot represent it as a statement of fact when it isn't. You may proceed.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I withdraw the exact figure, although we do know that if an allocation of five to six million U.S. dollars and if you calculate that 2.6882 is one U.S. dollar to EC, that's roughly a number that you'd get. But I move on, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the statement.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Yes, because one day you might argue that they bought it for more. It's just an allocation. It is OK. I think we can agree you may proceed.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want the public to not think that there wasn't an allocation, because in December of 2025, Executive Council minutes show that there was money that was put in escrow for the purchase of this House. The exact amount has not been stated, as expected and for commercial purposes, and I have no problem with that. But the point is that I'm just trying to say that greater priority is given to procuring a House in London than for the amount that is given for relief immediately for the people of Anguilla. The hullabaloo is that the people of Anguilla deserve the relief, not that we need at this point in time to procure a house in London or anywhere else.

Charity begins at home and that's what we should be working on. I also want to make one more point. The Minister of Finance Premier mentioned the member for Sandy Hill stated that the import duties are moderately above expected. I'd like to propose that import duties is a reflection of the economy, because the more the economy is doing well, then there are more imports given that Anguilla is an import dependent country. The negative economy is affected by the policy decisions of this AUF administration. To pause, to reassess, to reprioritize and to go and reverse.

I stand here today. I support the bill as it is, but I ask that more be done so that the relief can be passed on to the people of Anguilla so that the cost of living can be mitigated. The increases in the cost of electricity can be mitigated. The cost of fuel can be decreased because we know that.

PAPERS

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Papers, None.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Reports from committees, None.

PETITIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Petitions, None.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk:

Government notices, None.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MOTIONS

Clerk:

Private Members Notices, None. Motions, Motion 1 of 2026 2/13 HOA for the suspension of Rule 13 of the House of Assembly Procedure Rules.

MOTION 1 OF 2026 - SUSPENSION OF RULE 13

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable members, there is one Motion 1 of 2026, second of the 13th House of Assembly for the suspension of Rule 13 of the House of Assembly Procedure Rules. I call upon the mover to move that motion. I recognize the Honourable Premier.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. Good afternoon to you, Madam Speaker, good afternoon to the members of this honourable House and the listening and viewing public. Madam Speaker, I beg your leave to move Motion 1 of 2026, Dash 2/13 HOA for the suspension of Rule 13.

Hon.Jose Vanterpool:

Madam Speaker, I rise a second.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Yes, leave is granted to move the motion, Honourable Member.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. Madam Speaker, if I may give a brief explanation. On the 14th of March 2026, I would have written to the Governor requesting that this honourable House be paroled until the 14th of April 2026. Obviously, today is not the 14th of April and it is as a result of international tensions, geopolitical issues and one of the reasons why we are here today, and so I am asking that suspension of Rule 13 be granted.

Section 13 for the listening and viewing public, Section 13(1) states that at the start of each session, the Premier shall move a non-substantive motion that the Assembly has considered the Government's legislative program and subsection 2 says the Premier speech in support of the motion referred to in Rule 13(1) shall be known as the opening address and as a result of the urgent matters for which we are before this honourable House today, I am requesting that the date of the 14th of April 2026 be kept for the date of the presentation of the opening address and so is on that basis I am requesting that Rule 13 be suspended.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Leave is granted for the substantive motion to be moved.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. WHEREAS, the second session of the 13th House of Assembly of Anguilla has been summoned earlier than planned by Her Excellency Acting on my advice in order to progress the Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act 2026, which is of an urgent nature and necessary to provide for and protect the well-being of the people of Anguilla and WHEREAS Rule 13 of the House of Assembly Procedure Rules provides that at the start of each session, the Premier shall move a non-substantive motion that the Assembly has considered the Government's legislative program and the Premier's speech in support of the motion referred to in Rule 13(1) shall be known as the opening address. And whereas the immediate focus of this Government is to provide urgent and direct relief to the people of Anguilla, be it resolved that this.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, this House now resumes. You may be seated. To the listening public, we apologize for the disruption. We had the electricity time out, so the generator kicked in. The honourable Premier was in the process of making a motion in respect of Motion 1 of 2026. Leave has been granted for Motion 1 of 2026, two of the 13th Session to be moved by the honourable Premier. I'll invite the Premier to start again.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker, whereas the second session of the 13th House of Assembly of Anguilla has been summoned earlier than planned by Her Excellency acting on my advice in order to progress the Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act 2026, which is of an urgent nature and necessary to provide for and protect the well-being of the people of Anguilla.

And whereas Rule 13 of the House of Assembly Procedure Rules provides that one, at the start of each session, the Premier shall move a non-substantive motion that the Assembly has considered the government's legislative program and two, the Premier's speech in support of the motion referred to in Rule 13 (1) shall be known as the opening address and whereas the immediate focus of this government is to provide urgent and direct relief to the people of Anguilla. Be it resolved that this House of Assembly suspends Rule 13(1) of the House of Assembly Procedure Rules and be it further resolved that the Honorable Premier shall move the motion for the consideration of the Government's Legislative program and deliver the opening address on Tuesday, 14th April, 2026.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Is there a seconder in respect of motion 1 of 2026?

Hon.Kyle Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I rise the second.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you. I now invite the members to make any contributions as in respect of the motion. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Valley North.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I wish to put on record my sincerest gratitude to my colleagues, the Honourable Premier and the honorable minister, Mr. Kyle Hodge, for the outstanding work that they have done to progress this piece of legislation. I also want to thank the previously acting Premier, Mr. Jose Vanterpool, for the work he also did in the Premier's absence to ensure that we were able to get to the stage where we are at today.

And Madam Speaker, the reality is, is that what's happening today has not occurred in a vacuum. It is as a result of a well-planned and well thought out relief response to the geopolitical situation that is existing globally and that Anguilla is naturally being affected by. The Government of Anguilla's response, Madam Speaker, generally took the following approach, tracking all of the changes and development in the global space.

This is the war, the price of oil policy and tariffs generally, Madam Speaker. Determining the most beneficial policy direction to respond to that.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable member, I'm only going to interrupt you for this one reason. We have the substantive bill that's going to be on the floor, and I'm wondering if you're minded to save the contribution and consolidate it then and focus on the motion, or would you want to make it now, because if you do, then you're not going to be able to make a submission on the substance of the bill later on. That might be the preference, because if I give leave for you to do that, then everybody else does it, then nobody gets to speak again on the actual bill.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Sure. So I will hold it for then, Madam Speaker. Then everybody will want to. All right, no problem, Madam Speaker, sure.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Is that a fair approach? So, this is in respect of the motion to suspend and to adjourn to next sitting for the opening address. And I don't believe that it's contentious. If anybody else has any contributions to that motion in and of itself, I suspect not, but I don't want to preempt if you don't. I would invite the mover to make any final contributions in respect of the motion to suspend. And if not, I think we can put that to the vote, so we can get to the meat and potatoes of the matter.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Members of this honourable House for their support or their acquiescence to this Motion. I have no further statements in relation to this motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MOTION 2 OF 2026 - SUSPENSION OF RULES 31(1) AND 44

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, Honorable Premier. In respect of the motion that is before us, the question is, Honourable Members, that Rule 13 be suspended for the purposes of this sitting such that the opening address be adjourned to the April 14th sitting. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say no. The ayes have it. The motion is carried and Rule 13 is suspended for this sitting. I now invite the Honourable Premier to move a second motion, Motion 2 of 2026.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg your leave to move Motion 2 of 2026, Dash 2 of 13 HOA for the suspension of Rule 31(1) and Rule 44, Madam Speaker. The request for the suspension of Rules 31(1) and the rule 44 are in relation to the rule requiring that no member shall ask a question or make a motion unless they have given notice in writing of such or motion either some previous statement of the House of Assembly or to the clerk not less than three days prior to the House of sitting of the House of Assembly with such question is to be asked or motion to be made. And, Madam Speaker, just for clarification, the notice of questions and motions is at Section 31(1), to which I am reading.

And the section Rule 44 requires that every bill shall be read three times prior to being passed, and no bill shall pass through more than two readings at anyone sitting unless this rule has been formally suspended for the purpose. And

Madam Speaker, based on the urgent need to be before the House today and based on the circumstances as we will go through in terms of the substantive motion itself, we are requesting that both Rule 32(1) and Rule 44 be suspended.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Is there a seconder for the motion?

Hon.Jose Vanterpool:

Madam Speaker, I rise the second.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Leave was granted. Thank you, honourable Member. Just so, the public is following us in terms of the Standing Orders. What the honourable Premier has asked that this honorable House consider is suspending Rule 32, subsection one, in respect of the notice requirement for presentation of motions and bills to this House on the basis that there is an urgency and a necessity for this motion and the Bill subsequent for the best interest and well-being of the people of Anguilla.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS - MOTION 2 OF 2026

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Just so the public is following us in terms of the Standing Orders. What the honourable Premier has asked is that this House consider suspending Rule 32, subsection one, in respect of the notice requirement for presentation of motions and bills to this House, on the basis that there is an urgency and a necessity for this motion and the Bill subsequent for the best interest and well-being of the people of Anguilla. Are there any contributions in respect of the substantive motion of 2026 that is on the floor? I repeat that in respect of substantive contributions, you will have an opportunity to do so at the appropriate time.

If there are no contributions in respect of the Motion, does the honourable Member wish to speak any further to the motion?

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to thank the honourable Members of this House for their acquiescence to this motion.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, this motion is in relation to Standing Order 44. It is a standing Order that we do take quite seriously, but because it only allows the Speaker to suspend the rules so that three readings can proceed in one sitting in these circumstances, I will put the question. I propose that Rule 32(1) and 44 of the House of Assembly Procedural Rules, 2021 be suspended for the purpose of this sitting. Rule 32(1) requires three days written notice of questions and motions. Rule 44 provides that no bill shall pass through more than two readings at any one sitting. The suspension of these rules is necessary, having regard to the circumstances which caused this House to be convened on short notice.

I therefore put the question to the honourable members that the motion as moved by the honourable member for Sandy Hill be passed as a resolution. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say no. The ayes have it. This motion 2 of 2026 has become a resolution of the House. We may proceed with the Order Paper.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL DEBATE

Hon.Cardigan Connor:

Madam Speaker, I believe that in every situation there is an opportunity and for a number of years as Anguillians, we like to think that we work together, but yet very independently. If you consider over the years a number of our merchants would actually import containers and they were probably half full. They did not work together. We could marvel at the Chinese and say that they work well together but maybe this is an opportunity for us as a people or businesses to work together. I must say something again,

Madam Speaker, about the people of Anguilla, not because you are not living in Anguilla does not make you non-Anguillian. So, wherever you are whether you are in Miami or whether you are in London or England you are very much Anguillian and for the persons who constantly have to talk about this office in England as if it is the worst thing that can happen, it is an investment in our people but you know what, you cannot convince some people against their will.

If it is their objective to try muddy the waters, if this the worst they can do to us as a government, I think we are doing pretty well Madam Speaker. Again, I will have to say that my team have gone out of their way, my team is not just the elected Members, but the persons who have Anguilla's interest at heart. Over the last week especially, a lot of work has been to make sure that this Bill comes to the House with haste because again we are being proactive and not reactive to what is likely to happen in another few days. So,

Madam Speaker, I don't intend to go on much longer than that. I think much has been said, but I am here to show support to the Premier who has brought this bill to the House, to our team, to the Attorney General's Office, to the Deputy Governor, to the Permanent Secretaries and all who put a hand in this to make sure our people of Anguilla could see that

we are not taking away from them to give them back crumbs. That probably was the case with the GST and they thought we were doing something good, but the fact is we are giving people support ahead of time because we know that there are certain things that will happen beyond our control, but what we have control of, we will make sure that it is in the best interest of our people.

I thank you Madam Speaker.

Hon.Cordell Richardson:

Our families are feeling it, our businesses are feeling it and as a government, we have a responsibility to act decisively. This is exactly what the Anguilla United front government has done and continues to do under the guiding principles of putting people first. Madam Speaker, allow me to highlight the significant measures already undertaken, which a lot of my colleagues have already spoken to for the day.

The government have removed all taxes from the importation of fuel, ensuring that the price at the pump for gasoline and diesel remain stable and manageable and we are also looking at LPG. Additionally, the government has taken an extraordinary step to absorb this increase in fuel surcharge for electricity.

The full increase of 46 cents per kilowatt for households, businesses and 23 cents per kilowatt for the accommodation sector. Madam Speaker, these actions are not small, they represent a direct financial commitment by the government to shield our people from rising global costs. They ensure that families can have their lights on, businesses can remain operational and our tourism sector remains competitive. Madam Speaker initially for a three-month period, a clear demonstration that this government does not hesitate to act when the welfare of the people is at stake.

This is what it means to put people first. Today we take this commitment one step further. The proposal to temporarily shift the import tax base from CIF – cost Insurance and Freight to FOB -Free on Board. Is another strategic invention to reduce the cost burden on our people. Madam Speaker, by taxing goods based on FOB rather than CIF, we are effectively removing freight and insurance costs from the tax calculation.

Thereby lowering the overall cost of imported goods. What does this mean in real time? It means lower prices on food and essential goods. Reducing costs pressures on businesses, greater affordability on construction materials and continued access to vehicles and other necessities. As Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for agriculture, I must emphasis that food security remains a top priority for me.

This measure directly supports the objective by reducing the cost of imported food and agriculture inputs. This will help ensure that our people have consistent access to affordable nutrition. But it goes beyond food. Madam Speaker, this measure supports aspiration of our people, especially our youth. It helps ensure that a young person in district 4 and Anguilla by extension can still dream of building a home, a family can still purchase a vehicle, that small business can continue to grow. In essence, Madam Speaker this intervention helps to preserve the spending power of the people of Anguilla and particular those whom we represent.

I stand here not as someone who seeks the spotlight, but as someone deeply committed to the well-being of our people. I am passionate about ensuring that every Anguilla has the opportunity to live comfortably, to provide for their families and to pursue their goals. I'm very sure that everyone on this side of the aisle aligns with the same compassion for the people of Anguilla. Madam Speaker, this motion aligns perfectly with that commitment.

It is practical. It is timely. And most importantly it is compassionate. Madam Speaker, AUF government has demonstrated through action, its purpose to put people first is not just a slogan. It's a governing principle, from stabilising fuel prices, to protecting electricity costs and now to reducing the tax burden on imports. Each of these measures form comprehensive response to safeguard the livelihoods of our people. I wholeheartedly support this motion and urge my honorable colleagues to do the same which all have done. Let us continue to act in the best interest of the people of Anguilla and let us continue to put people first.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honorable Member. I invite the member to reply.

Hon Cora Richardson-Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to express sincere thanks to a number persons and you have heard over the presentations that were made, the thanks that were previously given. The permanent secretary for the ministry of finance, Ms Marissa Harding Hodge and the Ministry of Finance team, the Honourable Kyle Hodge and the Ministry of Economic Development. Mr Keil Connor and the Customs Department, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Governor's Office, Honourable Jose Vanterpool as acting Premier who would have pushed forward this Bill to allow it to be brought to the House today. My ministerial and elected colleagues. Madam Speaker, I am filled with pride today because on every occasion that the Members have acted, my colleagues, they have shown grit and determination in being able to push through on whatever it is that has been placed before them.

I have to admit each one of them has been tested during the time that they acted as Premier. And so what it says is that we are a competent administration, a government filled with ministers, with elected Members, all of whom can take charge and can lead Anguilla forward and for that, I'm truly grateful and

I wish to express my thanks to each one of them. The

Governor's Office, the Deputy Governor and the Governor were very kind in allowing executive council to take place on Friday, which was Good Friday and so while other persons were relaxing at home, the Members, the governor's office the team, the AG would have been working assiduously to make sure that this Bill was passed.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to thank the Members of the Opposition because inspite of the theatrics that were displayed here today, each one of them stood up and said that they were in full support of this Bill. What this Bill really is, is moving from cost insurance freight as you have heard to free on board for a period of three months. It is significant. It is timely.It is important that we progress this Bill and that is why we would have suspended the three sittings of the House of Assembly.

Madam Speaker, that is why we are here today as opposed to returning on the 14th of April. In that regard, I wish to thank you, the Clerk of the House and the staff of the Assembly for facilitating us during this shortened period of time as well. So we look forward to, I certainly look forward to being here on the 14th of April when I will present my opening address for the new term.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would bring to an end my response to this Bill. Thank you.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL - SECOND READING VOTE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honorable Member. Honourable Members, the question is put that the Bill be read a second time. Those in favour say I. Those against say no. The I's have it.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL - COMMITTEE STAGE

Clerk:

An Act to provide for Temporary Modification of the Valuation of Imported Goods for the purpose of assessing import duty at ad valorem rates, and for related matters.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, at this stage the House will resolve itself into a Committee of the whole, would the Members wish for a five-minute break, or would you want to press on and move forward? The House will resolve itself now into a Committee of the whole. Does the membership wish for a break or to continue? Continue. Okay. This House is now in Committee.

Clerk:

Clauses 1 through 5.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I put the question honourable Members that clauses 1 through 5 do stand part of the Bill. Those in favour say I. Those opposed say no. The I's have it. Clauses 1 through 5 stands part of the Bill.

Clerk:

The title and the enacting clause.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I put the question that the title and the enacting clause do stand part of the Bill. Those in favour say I. Those opposed say no. The I's have it. The title and the enacting clause stands part of the Bill.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

The Committee has now concluded its consideration of this Bill. We will resume our sitting and I call upon the Honourable Premier to report.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL - COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon Cora Richardson-Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to report that the Bill shortly entitled the Bill for Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026 has passed through Committee without amendment and is now ready for its third reading.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL - THIRD READING

Clerk:

A Bill for Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026 third reading.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I call upon the honourable mover.

Hon Cora Richardson-Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that the bill shortly entitled the Bill for Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026 be read a third time and passed.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Seconder.

Hon.Cardigan Connor:

I second Madam Speaker

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded that a bill shortly entitled a Bill for Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026 be read a third time and passed. Those in favour say I. Those opposed say no. The I's have it. I call upon the Clerk.

Clerk:

An Act to provide for Temporary Modification of the valuation of Imported Goods for the purpose of assessing import duty at ad valorem rates, and for related matters

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL - PASSAGE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, I declare that the Bill has passed and shall be titled Customs Temporary Modification of valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026. Thank you for your time and contributions today. We shall proceed with the order paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

CUSTOMS (TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY) ACT, 2026 - FIRST READING

Clerk:

Personal explanations, None. Other business. Government business. A bill for Customs Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty Act 2026 first reading.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, I call upon the mover, the honourable Premier, to move for the first reading of a Bill for the Customs (Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty) Act, 2026.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that the Bill shortly entitled A Bill for Customs (Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty) Act, 2026 be read a first time.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I invite a member to second.

Hon.Kyle Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I rise to second.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honourable Member. If there are no objections to introduction of the Bill, I wish to put the question that the Bill be read a first time. Those in favour say aye, those opposed say no. The ayes have it. I call upon the Clerk to read the bill for a first time.

Clerk:

An act to provide for a temporary modification of the valuation of imported goods for the purpose of assessing import duty at ad valorem rates and for related matters.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Members, I declare that the Bill has been read a first time.

CUSTOMS (TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY) ACT, 2026 - SECOND READING

Clerk:

A bill for Customs (Temporary Modification Of Valuation of Import Duty) Act, 2026 second reading.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I call upon the honourable Premier in respect of the second reading of the Bill.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that the Bill shortly entitled A Bill for Customs, Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026 be read a second time.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Seconder?

Hon.Kyle Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I rise to second.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

It has been moved and seconded. I now invite the Mover to state the objects and principles of this bill.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in relation to the bill shortly entitled the Customs (Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty) Act, 2026 being presented in this honourable House. This bill is a temporary but important measure brought at a time when households and businesses in Anguilla continue to feel the effect of rising external costs in their daily lives. It is a practical and time bound intervention intended to provide some measure of relief during a period of continued volatility in shipping. Freight, insurance and other import related costs.

The bill does one clear thing. For a temporary period of three months, it changes the basis on which import duty is calculated for goods charged at ad valorem rates. At present, import duty is assessed under full landed cost of goods. That means the value includes not only the price of the goods themselves but also freight, insurance and other shipping related charges.

Under this bill, for the temporary period, import duty will instead be calculated on a free on board basis, that is, on the price of the goods at the place of export, excluding freight, insurance and the other costs associated with bringing those goods to Anguilla. In practical terms, this means that for a defined period when freight and shipping costs rise sharply, those additional external costs will no longer continue to enlarge the duty base on which import duty is charged. That is the change this bill makes. It is focused, it is temporary, and it is intended to provide relief where relief is justified.

The rationale for this measure is straightforward. Anguilla is a small and highly import dependent economy. We import the vast majority of what we consume and use: food, household goods, building materials, business inputs and a wide range of essentials. When global instability drives up freight, insurance and shipping costs, those increases are already felt across the economy.

But under the current evaluation framework, those same costs also become part of the taxable base for duty. So the pressure is multiplied. The external shock does not stop at the dock, it follows the goods into the tax calculation itself. That is precisely the issue this bill seeks to address. This is not a permanent rewriting of the customs system. It is not an abandonment of fiscal responsibility.

It is not an untargeted concession without limit or structure. It is a temporary stabilization measure, designed to cushion the impact of unusual and elevated external costs, while preserving government's ability to monitor conditions carefully and reassess the position after the three month period expires. The Bill also makes clear that this temporary arrangement applies only to goods imported on or after commencement, and that it does not disturb duties already properly chargeable before that date. Nor does it alter the established customs machinery for entry, verification, evaluation, review, reassessment or collection.

In other words, this is a measured intervention, not a disruption of the wider legal and administrative framework. But this bill must also be understood in its wider context. It forms part of a broader package of temporary measures advanced by the government in response to the cost pressures now affecting our people and our economy. In addition to this temporary modification of the import evaluation base, government has also advanced the temporary suspension of import duty on fuel and the custom service fee on gasoline and diesel imports for an initial three-month period at an estimated revenue cost of approximately $1.5 million.

Government has also intervened to cushion the increase in the electricity fuel surcharge by maintaining the surcharge at $0.42 per kWh for most customers and capping it at $0.65 per kWh for the accommodation sector, with government covering the difference. That support alone carries an estimated initial fiscal cost of more than $6 million dollars.

The measure before this House today is expected to carry a revenue impact of approximately $2.4 million over the three-month period. Taken together, these interventions amount to over $10 million in support in the near term. This is a substantial intervention by government to shield households and businesses from external shocks, but it is being advanced based on careful judgment and not exuberance.

At the end of February 2026, Anguilla's fiscal performance was encouraging. Total revenue stood at $120.08 million, modestly ahead of profile and expenditure remained contained overall. That performance was supported in significant measure by strong AI domain revenues, which brought first quarter collections to roughly $77.7 million dollars. But I want to frame that position with discipline and realism.

Strong revenue performance, particularly early in the year, should not lead us to excitement or complacency. Not every revenue line is performing at the same level. Some are moderate, some are more volatile. Import duties, for example, were only modestly above profile by February, and within that category there were clear timing effects and the collection variances.

Other non-tax revenues have been softer. So while the overall picture is positive, it is not uniformly strong across every line of revenue and it would not be responsible to speak as though all fiscal constraints have disappeared. We know too that the first quarter is often one of the stronger periods for government revenue performance, while later parts of the year, particularly the third quarter, can be leaner. Prudence must never become an excuse for inaction. Fiscal responsibility must not be interpreted as standing aside while external shocks work their way through every corner of our economy. Leadership requires balance.

It requires discipline, yes, but it also requires responsiveness. It requires a government prepared not merely to observe hardship but to act where action is justified, proportionate and possible. This bill is an expression of that principle. It says that in a moment of strain we will not stand idly by and allow external cost pressures to cascade unchecked through every layer of our economy.

It says that where the law permits us to act temporarily and sensibly in the public interest, we will do so. It says that this government understands that sound public finance is not an end in itself, it is a means by which we protect people, preserve stability and create conditions for resilience. The people of Anguilla expect seriousness from their government. They expect compassion, but they also expect competence. They expect us to measure carefully, to act responsibly and to stand with them when international events beyond our shores begin to affect life within our homes, our businesses and our communities.

This government will continue to govern with steadiness, with discipline and with purpose. We will not gamble with the public finances, but neither will we shrink from using them wisely and temporarily to protect our people when circumstances demand it. We will continue to act, not carelessly, not theatrically, and not for applause, but because this is what serious government requires. This is a government that understands that the cost of living is not an abstract phrase.

It is the cost of feeding a family, keeping a business open, paying a light bill, restocking a shelf and completing a home. And where we can provide relief in a way that is lawful, measured, temporary and fiscally responsible, we will do so. It is a cost of putting people first. Madam Speaker, I therefore look forward to presenting this Customs Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty, Act 2026 in this honourable House.

Thank you.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honourable member for Sandy Hill. Does anyone else wish to speak? I recognize the honourable Leader of Opposition.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon to you. Good afternoon to the Members of this honourable House. I want to say welcome back to everyone and hope that everyone had time to refresh, rejuvenate and be ready for this second session of the Anguilla House of Assembly. Madam Speaker, I stand in support of this bill entitled a bill for Customs Temporary Modification Of Valuation Of Import Duty Act, 2026.

I want to commend the Government of Anguilla for this relief measure. But, Madam Speaker, I stand here to state that the Government of Anguilla has not gone far enough. Anguilla is an import and import dependent country, Madam Speaker. And prior to implementation of the Goods and Service tax.

ECONOMIC RELIEF AND CUSTOMS DUTIES POLICY PROPOSALS

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Prior to implementation of the Goods and Services Tax, import duty was the main revenue earner for Anguilla. The Goods and Services Tax, which is now gone, was replaced by the Goods Tax and the General Services Tax. We have the AI domain name registration revenue as well. These are the major revenue earners and sources.

I think it is high time to review the way customs duties are calculated and to consider permanent removal of freight and insurance costs from the calculation of import duties. Madam Speaker, this is of significant concern. Back in 2010, when the Anguilla United Movement administration came in, there were no reserves and there were deficits, similarly in 2020 when the Anguilla Progressive Movement came in. There has to be prudent management of the public purse. When better can be done, then better should be done, and that is why we think at

this time consideration should be given to providing relief for the people of Anguilla in a manner that has a significant impact. Given the volatility of global markets and geopolitical impacts on supply chains and shipping costs, during and post COVID, the APM had proposed capping the amount for freight costs in the calculation of customs duties.

At that time, we did not have $300 million in reserve. Madam Speaker, I don't know if we still have $300 million in reserves because we're still awaiting that information. Capping freight, because freight was so volatile, would certainly help to decrease the cost of items on the shelf, as businesses would have a more predictable calculation for their costs on duties.

Now that the dot AI revenues are being boasted to bring in significant numbers—the first quarter bringing in $77 million when the projections were just over $230 million—I think it is time for further relief to be given to the people, including full permanent consideration for removal of the freight and insurance calculations in the import duty. The expected benefits would be lower prices in the stores, predictability for businesses, greater stability in their pricing strategies, economic relief for Anguillans with a decrease in cost of living, more disposable income, and increased economic well-being. The Government of Anguilla's intention is to reduce the impact of rising and potentially increasing external costs on importers and consumers, and to provide short-term relief in anticipation of continued pressure on global prices.

Commendable, Madam Speaker, but the people of Anguilla deserve more. In addition to the policy measures implemented by the former APM administration, including Senior Shield, Junior Shield, removal of property tax for residencies, increased contributions for vulnerable families, food vouchers for the elderly, and electricity credits for over 6,000 homes, I propose a relief package for the next 12 to 18 months. This would allow our residents and businesses to benefit more and plan better for the foreseeable future. With your permission, Madam Speaker, may I read what that proposal was, which was made public a few weeks ago?

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Which proposal? Sorry?

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

It's a proposal that I presented in written and voice form to the people of Anguilla a few weeks ago. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Appreciate it.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

You may proceed.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Number one, we would reduce import duties, and I'm glad to see that the government has taken this into consideration. This bill addresses that, but for three months, which is not long enough. This measure should be implemented for at least 12 months and, as stated earlier, considered as a permanent measure. Number two, continue and expand on electricity credits.

The Government of Anguilla proposal to subsidize the fuel surcharge for Anglec provides some relief to residents and businesses. It is good to see that this administration is willing to provide relief. Previously, this AUF administration saw this type of relief as handouts and stated the opposition pre and post the 2025 election. Renewable energy should be a full transition, as previously proposed by the APM administration.

This would now have put us in a much better position when the cost of fuel has astronomically increased and shipping has increased. If we had gone to renewable energy—solar, wind, both—we would not be hampered right now by these increasing costs. When you go to the pump and see that the cost of a gallon of gas is over $18 EC, and in other places $7 or $8 US per gallon, we know that is right at our doorstep. That is why I propose, Madam Speaker, that this bill, which helps, should be extended for a longer period to continue that relief, which is necessary for the people of Anguilla.

Direct investment in Anglec would be helpful at this time also. The Government of Anguilla owns or controls 79% of the shares in Anglec. A direct government investment would ease the pressure and allow Anglec to incur less debt and move toward increasing energy independence and decreasing cost of electricity. This is one time, Madam Speaker, when the AUF administration should pause, reassess, and reprioritize—a full transition to renewable energy and a more viable Anglec versus buying a house in London, which the people of Anguilla do not want.

Number four was removal of the Universal Social Levy, the USL. This would provide immediate relief for workers and businesses—3% more to take home for employees and 3% more for businesses to manage rising costs to keep people employed and to allow more innovation. This would increase spending power, thus stimulating the economy.

You may ask why the APM did not implement these measures. We did not have the resources. When we came in in 2020, there was a $97.1 million deficit. The country was closed down, our main economy, tourism, was shuttered. There was no money to even pay civil servants, who were the ones expected to keep the economy going. Even though we did not have the resources, we implemented relief measures when we could to reduce the cost of living as we went on. I mentioned some of those earlier.

It is noteworthy that we did not have the flexibility that this current administration has because we had to meet the three guidelines, which we did through prudent management of the public finances. We were held to stricter and higher standards. That is why this administration has the flexibility they have to spend the public purse like they are doing. That is why I think

it is important and imperative that the people of Anguilla benefit.

They have made the sacrifices, did the hard work, committed themselves, and now that we have the funds and the reserves, it is time that the people benefit. I would like to commend the former APM administration, a team of rookies who withstood the test of time. Other relief measures which should be taken at this time to stabilize and stimulate the economy include tax cuts and subsidies for first time home builders and home buyers, especially our young people. This would allow them to get the start they need. Increase grants and loans for new and existing businesses, especially youth-owned businesses. Also, government should incentivize niche businesses and creative and innovative businesses which introduce new sectors to Anguilla.

Maybe there is concern about where the reserves are at this point in time. We have no idea because that information has not been presented to the people of Anguilla and this administration has been in for over 13 months. On September 15, 2020, the APM administration had a nationwide meeting to discuss the finances, debt structure, state of the nation. The state was presented and all the different departments and the Ministry of Finance were able to present where we were and where we were headed, what our arrears were, what our obligations were.

This has not been done by this administration. Maybe a reflection, Madam Speaker, that they have a lot of money that they can play with. Maybe the people of Anguilla need to be concerned because we do know that in 2010 and 2020, even though there were reserves during those two administrations, the reserves were zero at the time—well, I should say $500,000. In 2020, when the AUF left administration, I wrote a letter to the Honourable Premier, the Minister of Finance, humbly requesting the current balance of the government reserves, a breakdown of any drawdowns or allocations made from the reserves over the past 13 months, any existing or planned commitments against the reserves, the government's policy framework guiding the use of reserves in the current economic climate, a report on the fiscal position of the Government of Anguilla, a report on the performance of all major revenue streams, including import duty, which the Minister of Finance and Premier just gave us—a snapshot.

The government's plan to manage the proposed budget deficit of over $70 million, which is projected to be funded from reserves in 2026, and any plans by the Government of Anguilla to directly assist hospitality workers and the underemployed during the 2026 offseason, where prices are expected to be at their highest. I await that information from the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance, and I expect it will be forthcoming, Madam Speaker.

I want to put things in perspective. The Minister of Finance and Premier, Leader of Government Business, just told us that the whole package of support will come up to about 10 million EC dollars. I'd like the people of Anguilla to note that the proposed cost of the UK House in London, 21 Fleet Street, is about 16 million EC dollars. The maintenance cost will exceed that over time.

POINT OF ORDER ON UK HOUSE COST FIGURES

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I do not know where the member is getting his information from, but his information is inaccurate. There is no final information that has come forward. We've put forward an offer and we are waiting for the due diligence aspect. As a result, there is no formal information due at this point in time.

The figures being spoken of are inaccurate and we are asking to withdraw those figures unless he can point to exactly where his figures are coming from. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member for Island Harbour, your response. Thank you, Madam.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. This number has been out there in the public domain for many months. If it was inaccurate, it was up to the government to state that previously, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Let me just address that. I believe on about two sittings ago, and the Honourable Member for Road North will correct me, there were a series of questions brought by the Honourable Merrick Richardson in respect of the House and those were answered in the House on the record. So if the figure isn't in the House on the record, then I would suggest that you consider withdrawing it because I believe, Honourable Member for Road North, you would have put those questions and I believe the answers would have been circulated to which you would have received copies.

Honourable Member for Road South, you have a contribution in respect of that—you recall the questions that were led in respect of the House.

COST OF FUEL AND ECONOMIC RELIEF MEASURES

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

The cost of fuel, Madam Speaker, can be decreased because we know that. The fishermen of Anguilla, it has cost them more to try to feed us. That is something that needs to be dealt with directly by this administration. The businesses in Anguilla need to be looked at in a different light so that the

cost can be controlled.

So I'm just asking that even though these are good measures, they have not gone far enough. If our reserves are as they're supposed to be, and our economy is as it's stated that it is, even though by all intents and purposes we know that it is in decline, this administration can do more for the people of Anguilla. I want to thank you.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honourable Member. Does any other Member wish to speak? I recognize the honourable member for Valley North and then I'll proceed to the single island wide electoral district Member Vanterpool thereafter.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I really honestly intended to be on my best behavior today, Madam Speaker. But the hypocrisy in this room is all too real. I wish to also welcome back the honorable Leader of the Opposition. It has been quite a while since we've seen him. I don't think I've seen him for the year. So it’s very good to have him back.

POINT OF ORDER - PRESENCE IN HOUSE

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

The point of order to your welcome. OK, what is the point of order?

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Yes, it is, Madam Speaker. That's misrepresentation. The member is giving an absolute falsehood, unless the member was not here on January 10th when I was in this honourable House.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

The point of order is that the Member does not wish for you to represent that he has not been here for the year. He indicates that he has been here on January 10th.

ECONOMIC RELIEF MEASURES AND BILL TO REMOVE DUTIES ON FREIGHT CHARGES

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Well, Madam Speaker, I said I haven't seen him in the House for the year. I wasn't here on January 10th. January 9th was my birthday, so I would have missed that one day and that was the one day that he was here. My sincerest apologies to the honourable Leader of the Opposition. He was here for one session for the year. I wish to put on record my sincerest gratitude to the Honourable Premier and the Minister for Economic Development, Mr. Kyle Hodge, for their excellent work in pushing this particular bill forward, but all the work that they've done in relation to the relief.

I'd also like to thank the Honourable Mr. Jose Vanterpool for the work he did in the last few days as the Acting Premier in helping us to finalize this legislation, as well as the dedicated public servants in the Minister of Finance, the AG Chambers, and even the Deputy Governor's Office and Governor's Office, because on Good Friday we were meeting for Executive Council to be able to make this a priority. The work that we are doing and the bill that is being brought here today has not been done in a vacuum. The Government of Anguilla's response to the global uncertainty took a number of different steps before we got here to this point. Over the past few months, we've been tracking all the changes and development in the global space, the war, the price of oil, tariff changes that started even from last year.

It was important for us to determine the most beneficial policy direction to respond to this global crisis. We also took an assessment of the Government of Anguilla's financial position and its ability to absorb the inflationary pressures that exist. After doing all of that, we settled on three main areas to respond to that we felt as an administration would have the most immediate impact: fuel, electricity and freight. We took an approach not specific just to the average consumer, but also an approach that also supported the business community, because we all know how important the private sector is to our economy.

Once we determined those three main key policy areas, we undertook the necessary legal procedures to make the support measures a reality. We took the relevant Executive Council decisions, went through the legal drafting and preparation for House of Assembly submissions. Our response has been grounded in data, responsible fiscal governance and a proactive approach to the uncertain times ahead. We are not waiting until the freight cost globally increases.

We are acting prior to that increase because we recognize that a proactive approach is needed to respond to these global challenges. I want to remind the general public, in addition to this bill, there are a number of other areas that we are addressing. I started with fuel, fuel at the pump. We have taken the decision to remove all duties on fuel importations at the port. We recognize that it is important for us to go all the way. We are also continuing to enforce the cap on fuel wherever possible, because we recognize that the global cost of fuel continues to rise, it continues to be volatile and we as a government need to do what we can and what we control to

relieve those pressures from the people of Anguilla.

Earlier the Premier indicated that that is going to be a response that costs over $1 million. In relation to the fuel, we've also looked at addressing electricity. Because of the war involving Iran, fuel prices around the world have gone up. This is because of the war disrupting oil supply, which makes fuel more expensive for everyone globally.

In Anguilla, this has caused the fuel surcharge to increase from $0.42 to $0.88. The Government of Anguilla did not wait for this increase to happen. We proactively operated, we ensured that we put something in place prior to the implementation of that, and so there will be no increase in fuel surcharge because the Government of Anguilla is going to be paying the difference.

What that means is that the additional $0.46 in fuel surcharge will be paid by the Government of Anguilla for the people. So, the fuel surcharge on existing bills will remain at 42% for residents and most businesses except the accommodation sector. For the accommodation sector, we are capping the rate at 65%, which means the government is paying that at $0.65. The Government of Anguilla is paying that additional $0.23.

This is important because this recognizes that you can't just give relief to individual citizens; relief must be balanced, well thought out, and must also include your business community wherever possible. If you're providing relief to the average consumer but not to the business community, then the average man still has to pay higher costs on goods and services. So wherever possible, it is important to offer a balanced approach because this administration continues to be people focused and people centered.

The business community are not our enemies. We don't regard the business community as criminals. We see the business community as an important part of Anguilla, an important part of the economy. As a matter of fact, government exists to serve the people of Anguilla and the private sector. We exist to facilitate a strong and vibrant economy. This bill before us today, just a couple of things, and I want the general public to understand exactly what this bill is going to do for the next three months. The government is making an important change to support families and businesses across the island. This is not specific to just the average man importing; this is for business persons and the average consumer who's ordering.

Custom duties will no longer be charged on freight charges, only on the cost of the goods themselves. This means that whether you are an individual shopping online or a business owner, when you bring items into Anguilla you will pay less on duties overall. For everyday citizens, this means real savings when shopping online. For example, if you buy an item that is $100 and you pay $25 for freight, in the past you would have to pay duties on $125.

Now you will only be taxed on $100. With shipping costs going up around the world, this change helps to keep more money in the pocket of businesses and the average citizens. For businesses, this measure is designed to help keep the cost of doing business as low as possible. Because of the war in Iran, businesses are already paying more to buy goods overseas, and shipping costs are expected to continue rising.

When costs go up for businesses, those costs are often passed on to consumers. By removing duties on freight and insurance, the government is helping to reduce those added costs. When businesses are able to pay less to bring in their goods, it helps to reduce their expenses and avoid having to raise prices charged to customers. Whether you're purchasing items for yourself or your business, this measure is designed to ease the pressure on island during a time when costs are rising globally.

We remain committed to doing our part, and we are also asking families and average citizens to also do their part wherever you can, whatever you can do to save on electricity costs, to reduce your fuel consumption wherever possible. We're encouraging persons to also do their part. We are all in this together. The electricity relief is over $6 million.

The fuel relief is over $1 million. The freight is over $2.5 million. That's over 10 million dollars in the next three months only in relief. But that can't be looked at in a vacuum because last year, the AUF administration delivered on one of its major campaign promises and that was to deliver on GST relief. We enacted GST-related policies that reduced over a period of a year government's income by over $40 million. That money didn't go up into thin air. That money is back in the economy, in people's pockets, giving businesses flexibility and liquidity.

So this three months of relief cannot be looked at in isolation, because last year we didn't wait for a year. We didn't wait for people to continue crying out. We came in and said this is a top priority for us and by August 4th, we were able to deliver. Because we know that putting people first is critically important. So to say that we are not doing enough is actually hypocritical.

DEBATE ON GST IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNMENT RELIEF MEASURES

Hon S Rog-Webster:

We didn't wait for people to continue crying out, Madam Speaker. We came in and we said this is a top priority for us and by August 4th, we were able to deliver. And that, Madam Speaker, because we know that putting people first is critically important. So to say that we are not doing enough,

Madam Speaker, is actually hypocritical. And it is hypocritical, Madam Speaker, because not too long ago, our people were in the streets protesting about the controversial GST tax, Madam Speaker, a tax set from its very inception. It was implemented not using a majority of elected officials, Madam Speaker, because as a matter of fact, two individuals on the government side at the time voted no against GST.

So from the very beginning, Madam Speaker, GST began with issues. Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, GST was progressed. A year later, Madam Speaker, the business community, individual citizens, took to the streets, Madam Speaker,

protested to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, begging them to delay the implementation on GST, begging them,

Madam Speaker, to sort out the situation with the goods on hand, Madam Speaker, that many had already paid on. And if government didn't come up with a solution, government itself would be imposing a temporary super inflationary period, Madam Speaker, so when I hear the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Assembly talking about needing to do more when under his administration, a super inflationary period was imposed on the people of Anguilla when we were barely out of COVID-19.

Things were not back up to speed yet. Businesses were just recovering, Madam Speaker. You see this is important because people tend to forget. Because there's a reason why, Madam Speaker, there are 8 members on this side of the House today. Not by chance, Madam Speaker, but by choice, by choices of the people of Anguilla and,

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about that. Temporary super inflationary period, Madam Speaker. I want to take people back to that period. In around June, Madam Speaker, the business community wrote to the then APM administration, Madam Speaker, and asked.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Madam Speaker, thank you so much for that. It's amazing that the honourable historian of the House, who's always giving irrelevant information, is coming with a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to continue, Madam Speaker, and take the public back to 2022, Madam Speaker, when the business community wrote to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and said to him at that time, the Leader of Government Business, that a temporary inflationary period would be put in place because they had already paid their 9% on the goods on hand,

Madam Speaker, and government was asking them to put 13% on those goods, Madam Speaker. And, Madam Speaker, I remember clear as day, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition came out front, he took the letter, told persons good afternoon and proceeded to go back into his office, Madam Speaker, and continued with the implementation of GST.

Madam Speaker told the business community they had till the end of July to submit their stock on hand for consideration. They extended it down to August when businesses submitted their stock on hand information. Some of those businesses, Madam Speaker, didn't even get the respect to have acknowledgment of receipt of that stock on hand information,

Madam Speaker. But you know what was also missing, Madam Speaker? No parameters for how refunds would be presented to those businesses. So businesses were expected to pass on savings without any mechanism in place to be able to ensure that they could get back what they would have passed on,

Madam Speaker. August goes, nothing, September nothing, October nothing. Meanwhile, the super inflationary period is happening. November nothing. Imagine my surprise on the 20-something of December, when we have already closed off and sent all our Christmas greetings. We are asked to come back to the House, Madam Speaker, for consideration in relation to remittance of taxes to businesses who passed on the GST savings.

Madam Speaker, imagine businesses on the 23rd of December, one of the busiest periods of the year, being issued letters, Madam Speaker, being told how they should go about submissions to get back GST relief that they should have passed on to consumers, Madam Speaker. And you are telling me that that was an administration that cared about relief, Madam Speaker?

Impossible. Because that administration, Madam Speaker, they could have taken the hit, just like we're taking the hit now. They could have taken the hit and said we are implementing.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I disagree. The member said that there were no details about the mechanism and that in itself is the problem, Madam Speaker. In this bill, you were saying you allow for credits to be remitted back, but no specific details on the mechanism for doing such, how that would have been considered, the date by which that had to be submitted, how it would have been handled. That is the reality and that is why they had to rush back to the House. At the end of the year, those details and that information was not given to the business community for almost 5 months.

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Yes, Madam Speaker, I think again, I state that the member is misleading because the bill itself, Madam Speaker, and which was signed into law as an act, did specifically state that every month the businesses could claim back also the specific stock on hand. They had a certain time that they could show that they had passed on those savings and reduced prices. Some businesses did, some didn't. Some even proclaimed that they wouldn't until the government gave. The reason why December 23rd happened is that it was a decision made at that time that it's best not to carry that into the new year, but to pay out the businesses for the stock on hand where they had paid the 9% and they had passed on the savings.

Now it's because there were two businesses that complied. There were other businesses that didn't and that's how they were paid out. So the Member is misrepresenting that. We didn't care about the businesses.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Madam Speaker, I won't belabour this point anymore because I'm actually going to share a presentation I made in this Honourable House a couple years ago, where I gave the timeline and the breakdown in this Honourable House. I'm going to reshare that again so the public is reminded by exactly what happened because I think that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that people may have forgotten, but they haven't forgotten, Madam.

So they didn't forget last year February either. Madam Speaker, I want to continue. So, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, there were ample opportunities to give relief. Beyond that, Madam Speaker, from the very beginning, GST was overperforming. Not based on what I've said, Madam Speaker. Based on what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would have said on multiple occasions in on multiple platforms, Madam Speaker, in government press conferences, in radio interviews,

Madam Speaker, that GST was overperforming. And of course, yes, it was overperforming, Madam Speaker, because the people were being overtaxed. Once the economy rebounded, Madam Speaker, tourism numbers were back up. It's almost a period right before COVID shut down when we were having record numbers, Madam Speaker. Horses were coming in again, imports were more regularized again because the island was doing well. But you're overtaxing the people. And the records showed that, Madam Speaker.

So meanwhile, you're boasting about all of this money that you're amassing and all of these things that you're doing, but the average man on the street is saying to you, this is too much. We can no longer eat out with our families because we have an extra 13% on our bill. Large families saying to you, we don't even go out anymore because it's just too much. You're asking for a break here, there, everywhere, Madam Speaker.

Yet all they could do, Madam Speaker, at the time was give the $500 EC credit to just residents alone on the electricity bills, Madam Speaker. Nothing to the business community, Madam Speaker. All the business community got, Madam Speaker, was reprimands and public belaboring. Madam Speaker, to come to this Honourable House and talk about us not doing enough,

Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this comprehensive relief package that we have here is one of the most comprehensive, Madam Speaker, ever in existence. When, Madam Speaker, have you had a complete reduction on duties on fuel, Madam Speaker? When have you had government subsidizing electricity at this level, Madam Speaker?

Not just saying you're giving a certain grouping a $500 EC dollar credit, Madam Speaker. We're actually saying that we are capping at a particular level for an entire three-month period, Madam Speaker, not a one-off payment.

POINT OF ORDER ON RELEVANCE - GST DEBATE

Hon.Mr. Haydn Hughes:

Madam Speaker, on a point of order. On the relevance of what the member is speaking, the GST. Are we debating the GST Bill? Are we debating the bill at hand? It seems as if we are debating the GST bill.

RULING ON POINT OF ORDER - GST DEBATE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Which part of the contribution is objectionable? I think so. It's a very wide topic. You'll recall that your Honourable Leader was able to bring in information as it relates to a House and it is why, because it touches and concerns taxes and the importance of this to the people of Anguilla. So I think the scope of debate is very wide in and of itself.

I can assume it'll touch on many things, but you'll agree with me that your Honourable Leader spoke about the London House and the impact. We spent quite a while on that. So I'm not going to allow the point of order. You may proceed and complete your contribution.

POINT OF ORDER - GST STOCK ON HAND MECHANISM

Hon.Ellis Lorenzo Webster:

Madam Speaker, point of order. I've listened. My point is the Member is intentionally misleading this House and the people of Anguilla. The member said that there was no proposal of how the stock on hand would be catered for. There was a proposal, Madam Speaker, that they would be claimed back, it just wasn't specified as to specifically when it was.

Based on the bill, Madam Speaker, said that within three months now it could have either been that you would get it where you would then get a claim back that you can deduct as you go along. In December of 2022, the decision was made that instead of carrying that into the new year, that the businesses would be paid out, Madam Speaker, so that we start the new year and that was a decision made with the Ministry of Finance and the Attorney General's Chambers,

Madam Speaker. So the member is intentionally misleading the people and she knows better.

RULING ON POINT OF ORDER - GST STOCK ON HAND MECHANISM

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

OK, Honourable Member, the point of order is in respect of the methodology. I believe you represented, Honourable Member, that there hadn't been any methodology in terms of how the stock would be dealt with, and the Honourable Member for Island Harbour is indicating that there was a methodology but did not give a date. Is that what you said? There were provisions, but it wasn't specified in terms of the date.

DEBATE ON RELIEF MEASURES AND GST ADJUSTMENTS

Hon S Rog-Webster:

At a particular level for an entire three-month period, Madam Speaker, not a one-off payment. Madam Speaker, when have you had? Duties lifted off of freight in this way, Madam Speaker, and I hear them keep saying three months isn't enough, two months isn't enough, Madam Speaker, we have already said that,

Madam Speaker, this is in the initial instant. We are going to go back and we are going to reassess, we are going to make sure that the Government of Anguilla can continue to absorb the relief, Madam Speaker. We're going to continue to see how our revenue heads are performing, how the economy is responding to the relief measures. Because that is what is important, Madam Speaker.

Not staying the course, not sticking to the plan, as the Honourable Merrick said when he was on this side, we have to stay the course and continue. Not if you see that there are challenges, Madam Speaker, not if you see that your people are hurting. There are times when you need to reassess. Readjust, Madam Speaker.

Because your people, your economy depends on it, Madam Speaker. And we are not in the business, Madam Speaker, of tying all people's hands, tying all businesses' hands and not giving them liquidity, not giving them the opportunity to be able to grow and to flourish. If we are giving to our people, we are also giving to our business community, Madam Speaker, and we are asking our business community to continue to support wherever possible.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Kyle Hodge's team would have done a critical assessment of responses to the GSC legislation and Madam Speaker, for the most part, most businesses responded very well. There are a few anomaly businesses where we don't think they did exactly what they were supposed to do, Madam Speaker, but ultimately the consumer will decide where they want to consume, where they want to shop and who they want to support,

Madam Speaker, ultimately. But, Madam Speaker, this administration remains committed to the people of Anguilla. Because we have amended that says to us when we are in times of crisis, we need to be able to respond effectively to the needs of the people, not on a whim, not on a rush, but based on data-driven decisions, Madam Speaker.

Making decisions that will have the most impact, Madam Speaker. Madame Siegel, we were crying out for times in relation to GST. We're saying, Laura, reduce GST on food. We gave any amount of suggestions, Madam Speaker. You know when GST was removed, Madam Speaker, effective January 1st, Madam Speaker.

Just as little short of two months before snap election, Madam Speaker. They said they couldn't make adjustments during the budgetary year and it would have implications and it isn't financially prudent to do. But Madam Speaker, we made the adjustment in August. We did the assessments in August, Madam Speaker.

The economy hasn't collapsed. The revenue heads are still performing well, Madam Speaker. And people have more liquidity. The businesses have more liquidity. And the economy is responding. Just ask the restaurants that are full on a nightly basis, Madam Speaker. Look at the boards coming over from Saint Martin and the day trippers. Performing very healthy, Madam Speaker.

When I speak to the economy is performing well. Houses are building. So to say, Madam Speaker, that the relief measures that we are putting in place now are not enough is really hypocritical, Madam Speaker, really hypocritical when these particular measures have gone far and wide and not one-off things here and there.

Madam Speaker, this is three solid months of a targeted, systematic approach that helps citizens as well as the business community, Madam Speaker. Because we, the business community, are not our adversaries, Madam Speaker. We are all in this together. If the business community does well, we do well, Madam Speaker, because the business community is who's paying.

So, Madam Speaker, I once again thank this honourable House for suspending the rules today for us to be able to bring this bill to this honourable House in three back-to-back readings, Madam Speaker. Because, Madam Speaker, when you have to give relief to the people of Anguilla, time is always of the essence.

And I speak, I again want to thank the public servants, customs and Minister of Finance, the AG Chambers, the Governor's office for the work that they have done over the last couple of weeks to be able to turn around all of this stuff, Madam Speaker, so short window in some cases, but we were able to get it done.

And I am grateful because ultimately we are all working in service to the people of Anguilla. So, Madam, I want to again thank my colleagues for their hard work in relation to these measures, and we will continue to inform the public, Madam Speaker, we will continue to engage the public so the public understands these measures so that they understand that this initial three months in two instances and two months in one instance is for us to continue reassessing.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't mean that at the end of the three months it will end. It doesn't mean that you want to do more. It means that what we have recognized is that within the next three months we must act and we must act now, Madam Speaker. And once we look at the data, because we will be assessing the data every single month, Madam Speaker, we will be seeing the revenue performances in the duty areas and all of these different areas that are affected,

Madam Speaker. And we will see what we can continue to responsibly do to respond. And we will see what the data is telling us about what's happening in the outside world, Madam Speaker and Madam Speaker. If you are wondering if we are

doing enough, persons need to follow some of the Saint Martin platforms and some of the other islands that are sharing the relief posts that I've been making, Madam Speaker.

Sharing the relief posts that the Government of Anguilla has been making, Madam Speaker. They are impressed by our proactive response. They are shocked in some cases by our response, Madam Speaker. But yet the opposition is saying we are not doing enough. We haven't done enough. But I know, Madam Speaker, that, you know, when you sit in the opposition benches, you are expected to say, you know, they should do more and they should do this and they should do that.

You know, that's part of your job, you know, and, and of course, when you do make an appearance to the House of Assembly, you need to make sure that persons remember that you were there. I get that, Madam Speaker, I understand that. But we also need to be fair to the people of Anguilla. And we need to acknowledge when strong, sensible policy decisions are made that reflect well thought out care, concern and data-driven decisions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to the people of Valley North and the people of Anguilla generally, we remain committed to delivering on relief wherever possible and walking with our people to ensure that everyone can thrive and do well in Anguilla. Thank you Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Does any member wish to speak? I recognize the honourable single Island White electoral district Member Vanterpool.

Hon.Jose Vanterpool:

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker, good afternoon to yourself, my honourable colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the House of Assembly staff, as well as everyone who's listening via the various means. And, Madam Speaker, I hope that everyone has had a blessed Easter. And you don't have to worry about me management, I'm always on my best behavior. But I too would like to welcome back the Leader of the Opposition. I had really hoped, Madam Speaker, that today, on the heels of Easter, that we would have had a unified house to move towards this relief package to protect the people of Anguilla from what's to come.

I, Madam Speaker, while the votes may show at the end of the day that both sides of the house and alignments I honestly thought would have been in and out of here in 30 minutes. But I hope that everyone had a big lunch, is well rested. I can verify that the coffee machine is well stocked, because it seems that unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we'll be here until tonight, but I don't for the life of me understand why.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition would have mentioned that the people of Anguilla deserve relief. Madam Speaker, that's the very reason that we are here today. That is the crux and the substance of the matter that we are debating today. We are here to provide that relief that the people so deserve,

Madam Speaker. Not for long winded speeches, not for political diatribes, simply to provide relief that the people deserve. Hi, Madam Speaker, before I get into my remarks, I just want to begin by first thanking the honourable Premier, the permanent Secretary of Finance as well as her team, as well as the honourable Minister for Economic Development, his peers and their teams, as well as the Comptroller of Customs, yourself,

Madam Speaker, the Clerk of the House of Assembly and everyone who was involved in making today possible. I also want to express my thanks to the AG and her team at the AG Chambers because while we are here today, and while it seems that persons view this as an opportunity for political point scoring, the reality of the matter is even for us to get here, it took a Herculean effort,

Madam Speaker, by a lot of different teams. And I just want to say that I don't want to lose the actual reason of this debate. We are here today, not again for going back and forth political point scoring going back to 2012. I'm pretty sure that at some point we might get back to the 19 sometimes. But the crux of the debate is we are here because the people of Anguilla deserve relief.

Madam Speaker, there's an African proverb that states that when elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. What that means in simple terms, Madam Speaker, is when we look at the great countries, America decides to get into a war with Iran, and now we are here debating the rising cost of fuel and cost of living, which we have absolutely no control over.

Madam Speaker, as my colleague, the Member for Valley N would have mentioned, we are moving from CIF which is cost insurance freight in terms of how duties are calculated, to free on board. And what that means simply is if a good costs $100, insurance and freight comes up to $25, previously duty would be calculated on that $125. When we look at what's going on in the Strait of Hormuz, we are right now, Iran will not allow certain ships to pass. Certain companies are not insuring the petroleum ships that pass through. That has a natural increase on the cost of living, which means that if insurance and freight go from that $25.00 value to $200,

Madam Speaker, we are simply here to say that instead of calculating duties on the $125.00, we will cap it at $100.00. So insurance and freight can rise to $200 or beyond. We are only calculating duties on $100. No, Madam Speaker, this is something that will bring positive benefits to not only the business community, but to all of the people of Anguilla.

And I hear the Leader of the Opposition when he mentions that, oh, this relief measure should be at least for a minimum period of 12 months. But, Madam Speaker, we have been clear in stating that this relief measure is in three months in the first instance, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if the Executive Council minutes are already out, but they will clearly dictate that we have also mandated that within the first two

months of this three month period that a comprehensive report has to be presented to Council for us to.

RELIEF MEASURES FOR IMPORT DUTIES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION

Hon.Jose Vanterpool:

We have been clear in stating that this relief measure is for three months in the first instance. Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if the Executive Council minutes are already out, but they will clearly dictate that we have also mandated that within the first two months of this three month period, a comprehensive report has to be presented to Council for us to analyze the data and understand the economic impact.

We see the benefits of this measure not just in terms of the immediate geopolitical situation, but when we think of our competitiveness to Saint Maarten, when we think about when insurance, freight and the geopolitical situation normalizes, this could be an incentive for our local businesses to want to import more, for our people to import more at reduced rates. So while persons will say that this will come at a cost to government, if you increase the frequency and the quantity of what's being imported, it will naturally balance out,

Madam Speaker. This is not to say that we are here today and saying after three months, whatever comes you have to deal with. No, Madam Speaker, this is three months in the first instance while we evaluate the data, while we operate with products and while we can justify the extension going forward.

Not saying just 12 months from now or two years from now because it sounds politically expedient, but because we have the data to justify why we are making that decision and that the government of Anguilla and ultimately the people of Anguilla will be better off as a result of that decision,

Madam Speaker. I want to highlight the fact that the Leader of the Opposition would have mentioned that had we transitioned to renewable energy, we would not be here today facing the turmoil and increasing prices as we have. But, Madam Speaker, that absolutely confused me because the reality is,

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition sat as premier and leader of Finance for four and a half, going on five years. Last week, on April 1st, Anglec signed a deal with the Caribbean Development Bank to approve the loan, approve the terms of reference and go forward on phase one of their transition plan. A transition plan that was presented to the people of Anguilla years ago, a transition plan that was viable years ago. We would have heard on the radio waves and in this Honourable House that Anglec cannot transition on their own towards renewable energy because the Government of Anguilla would have to co-sign the loan, and that would require the approval by the UK government. Nothing to do, so till now we are here, Anglec has signed this loan and the government of Anguilla needed to do nothing else but express to the Caribbean Development Bank that this is our policy direction, that transitioning to renewable energies is the way that we want to go.

But four and a half years in, we hear about a PPA the whole long time, but till now we've got no soil on the ground. So to talk about hypocrisy, Madam Speaker, I truly don't understand. Through you, Madam Speaker, to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, we are revising where we are currently at.

I wish that coming in as Minister of Utilities, I had solar and renewables on the ground. But while we are appreciative of the CDB getting to this point, government is evaluating on a daily basis our current situation. We're not just relying on the CDB loan, we are evaluating what other government investments need to take place in order to protect the people of Anguilla, in order to build resilience, in order to build sustainability, Madam Speaker.

So it's one thing to sit down there, but you had four and a half years. This does not happen overnight. As it comes to these measures, the reality is I'm hoping that once the data comes in, we can continue this measure into perpetuity because I do feel, but again, that's just my personal feeling, it has to be supported by the data before we make long-term decisions, that this is a positive move in the right direction, that this will be an incentive to building out economic resiliency for the people of Anguilla. But, Madam Speaker, just to say that this is not long enough, it doesn't go far enough.

Let's say, Madam Speaker, that we had come here today to say that this measure was going to be effective for 12 months. What would we have heard? That it should have been two years, that it should have been permanent? We can sit here and politically pander and go back and forth about three months from now, 12 months from now, two years from now. The reality on the ground is the people of Anguilla will be facing price increases effective April 12th. But we are intervening, known as these measures come into effect April 10th, the end of this week, Madam Speaker.

So we are reacting to the reality, not to the possibility. We are dealing with the situation on the ground, not the options that may be politically convenient for you to present. So, Madam Speaker, I just want to say, I needed to get this off my chest. I just want to not only inform support of this, but as a proud Anguillian looking at how the government, the different individuals who got it to this point, were able to mobilize to protect our people and to put people first. Madam Speaker, with that, I give my support and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Does any other Member wish to speak? I recognise the Honourable Member for Road North.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon to you, all Members of the House, the staff, and everyone who's listening by the various media platforms. Let me just start off quickly by saying I do stand in support of this bill that's before us. We on

this side of the House have been calling for relief measures from the time we saw what was happening with this war. We've been public about it. As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, even as far back as the budget last year for 2026, we said there wasn't enough to absorb shocks.

I could remember standing in this same position, Madam Speaker, in awe, in shock, that the budget was looking at taking $7 to $3 million from the reserves at that point in time, when there was the possibility of maybe war or an altercation happening down in Venezuela. If you had looked at the entire budget, Madam Speaker, and went straight line by line, figure by figure, you would have realized that at that point in time, there was nothing to absorb the shocks.

Madam Speaker, you don't have to worry about me being on my best behavior. I am forever at my best behavior. I do believe when we're in Parliament, we have to be parliamentary. So rest assured, Madam Speaker, as usual, I'll be on my best behaviour. Plus, I have too many friends on that side to never be on my best behaviour. The geopolitical issues have been touched and I won't go into detail, but I'll make a shameless plug: if you want to hear more of what's happening geopolitically and how it's affecting not just Anguilla, but the region, you can tune in on Thursday at 8:00 PM online conversations with The Source. Shameless plug, but it is indeed an awesome program, Madam Speaker, that everyone should listen to.

Well, Madam Speaker, we are here because of the bill before us. As other Members have said before me, the bill does not just address the only fees that government is attempting to bring relief to the people of Anguilla. As a citizen of Anguilla, a father, a husband, and a representative, a person who has to stand in the gap for hundreds of other people, I am happy for whatever relief comes for the people of Anguilla and will always support any relief for the people of Anguilla. We see where government has removed the import fuel duty and the CSF from fuel. Dr. Webster asks the question, why not longer? Because in April of 2022, Madam Speaker, the APM administration removed the excise tax from fuel.

It was removed in April to end in December with the possibility of being renewed, and it has been renewed every year since then. The same with GST at the time, Madam Speaker, to be permanently removed. So we were not standing over here just shooting in the dark and screaming from the rooftop that more can be done.

We know it's a three month period, Madam Speaker. If you have anyone who has a device, you can't help but know what's going on with this war. It's obvious it's not going to finish within two or three months, Madam Speaker. That is plainly obvious because every time you turn on the news, tensions are flaring, threats are being thrown. We just adjusted. The Honourable Single Island Wide Member said they are jumping ahead, but I know statements were made that we have nothing to worry about. Then quickly after that we saw that we had something to worry about because a press release went out to say fruit will be going up and then another release had to come out.

So who is jumping ahead or what are they jumping ahead of, Madam Speaker? When you have to renew things like the excise tax, like I said before, that we had removed from fuel four years ago, Madam Speaker, people forgot. Maybe that wasn't a handout, but that was money back in the people of Anguilla's pocket. This administration made the bold move to put a maximum price order on fuel way back when, again in 2022. This administration boasts about it publicly and we are glad that it's there because it doesn't benefit me alone, Madam Speaker, or you alone, but it benefits everybody when government can put a cap on the fuel.

We also see where Anglec has increased the fuel surcharge by over 100%, Madam Speaker. Government, again we say thanks, has kept the fuel surcharge at the first $0.42 when they will pay the $0.46. We appreciate that. Well, Madam Speaker, it's for three months. We're in April, we've got May, June, July. We know what June, July, August is, Madam Speaker, our hottest months, and as much as Members could say publicly that we need to look at conserving, in those hot months when you can't sleep you need to put on your AC and your fan 24/7.

That's when that 100% fuel surcharge increase will be kicking in, Madam Speaker. In summer, the children will be at home, so you can see what kind of bills the people of Anguilla will be looking at, Madam Speaker. I think I understand because the Honourable Single Island Wide Member just said that Anglec has signed.

ELECTRICITY FUEL SURCHARGE AND GOVERNMENT RELIEF MEASURES

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

The people of Anguilla will be looking at Madam Speaker, but then I understand. I think I understand because later honourable single island-wide member just said that Anglec has signed. To go forward with the US, I think it was a long time back. US $20 million to pursue renewables. And our loans have to be paid, Madam Speaker, and Anglec has to look at your bottom line.

Because that loan has to be repaid and even though the honourable Member said government did not have to sign anything, they were in a good position. No, Madam Speaker, they're in a wonderful position. I spoke sometime here back in the House. Madam Speaker, I'm moving into the mouldy building, rat-infested building with garbage strewn all over the place.

Madam Speaker, that was the government of Anguilla in 2020 when we came in. We rolled up our sleeves. We scrubbed, we varnished, we disinfected, we cleaned out. And we are now here. Because we had one more measure to come through before we can say to the UK, hey, we have our own financial independence.

That one measure came in under this administration, Madam Speaker. So we can see things like budget coming in in November because once you've fixed your figures, you don't have to send all the way to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and then wait weeks for a reply while the civil servants

there go over our work or are on vacation.

So our hands were tied. But rest assured, Madam Speaker, I was speaking to someone who is much wiser than me. And government, while it might not be the quote unquote contingent liability, if Anglec is ever in a jam, government will account. Labour will fuel our one. If our only electricity supplier goes under, government will have to step in and do what they have to do. So maybe one of the things that's now happening is government has obviously given the blessing to say to Anglec you can increase your fuel surcharge by 100%.

So these measures, it's 100%. It's Part 2 now. It has been raised by 46, so that's over 100%. Alright, if somebody wants to stand up on a point of order about my maths, please do. So when that fuel surcharge kicks in and government goes back to its regular duties, the people of Anguilla will be paying that difference because the cap is only for three months.

The people will be going back to paying that $0.88 fuel surcharge down the road.

Hon S Rog-Webster:

Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The member is misleading, Madam Speaker, because we've already said that at the end of the three months we will do an assessment to see where we're at and decide on the necessary steps of action. So he's really talking about hypotheticals and saying that we are going to go back there, which is—we don't know if the fuel surcharge will stay as it is, we don't know if it's going to go up and we need further interventions.

And we've said that over and over, Madam Speaker.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

The fuel surcharge obviously is as it is.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

The point of order is that it's a hypothetical that you're presenting.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Yes, Madam Speaker. As a God-fearing man, tomorrow is not promised. Tomorrow is not promised.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

But you can't make your submission on a hypothetical.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I am basing my submission on the facts.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

OK, yes, facts are good.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Government and Anglec have raised the fuel surcharge by 100%. From $0.42 to $0.88. That's a fact. Government has agreed to cap the $0.46 for the next three months, that's a fact. The same way, Madam Speaker, if I am speaking on hypotheticals, the government side is speaking on hypotheticals because they don't know what's going to happen after those three months.

Hon.Jose Vanterpool:

Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Just—the member would have said that government is speaking in hypotheticals and I would have simply said my argument just now that we are dealing with what's before us today. The reason for the three months is because we are assessing, we will have the data, conduct a review and figure out what is to come before deciding whether we should extend, how long we should extend, or make this a permanent measure. But I made it categorically clear, Madam Speaker, that we are addressing the situation on the ground today.

So the fact that the Member could say that government is speaking in hypotheticals is misleading.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

OK, let's not lose sight of the point of order. The original point of order was from the Honourable Member from Valley North

in respect of representing that it could go up or it could stay there. And I think the point of order is that it was a bit of a speculative point that you were making and that you should confine the submission to something factual. I do take note that nobody challenged your math, and that was purely factual.

But they're challenging you presenting a hypothetical in an instance where they're indicating that it's a temporary measure and that they may come back to assess, and I think that's fair.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

But Madam Speaker, to be fair, it's for three months, Madam Speaker, it ends at three months. Is there an argument, Madam Speaker, that the measures are for three months? Is there's an argument about that, Madam Speaker, through you?

CUSTOMS (TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY) ACT 2026 - TEMPORARY RELIEF

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Yes. What I understand is that it is a temporary measure and that there's room for assessment, revision and possibly coming back for an extension. Nobody has a crystal ball. But what I understand is that we all agree it is for three months. The legislation that's on the floor says Section 21, the Act expires 3 months after the date. No side disputes that. What is in dispute is that the member for Valley North is suggesting to you that perhaps it is not appropriate to speculate when the government side has represented that they will assess and may come back and ask the House to sit again and extend. We've seen extensions and revisions on legislation all the time.

They agree with you that it does say it is for three months.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

What they do not agree with you is that it cannot be represented that that's the end all of our tenor. Very urgent measure, that's all.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

But, Madam Speaker, until something comes to the House, it ends at the three months, Madam Speaker. Until that happens, it's three months, Madam Speaker. If they had come here and said six months, at six months, it would end at six months. So, Madam Speaker, they can say I'm speaking on hypothetical, but the bill, the relief and electricity, they said three months.

Madam Speaker, I am not arguing that they didn't say three months. And I'm thankful for it, Madam Speaker, but at the end of the day, it ends at three months. When they reassess it and if the figure can go for another three months, then we will be thankful for a further three months.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Well, that's all the honourable member raised objection to say. She's always saying to you that you're correct, but she's only saying to you don't represent to the public that that's the end because they have argued today. They have argued and I know each side is doing what they have to do, but we have to remember who you're doing it for. The public is following you and all the member is saying is there's no need.

All the member is saying is yes, we agree that it's three months, but also please say that we are going to assess and come back.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

But I'm not saying anything.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Not the end all. Everybody's saying the same thing. I think we all realize that, right? Everybody's saying the same thing. It may or may not is what there's—the caption of the bill. The caption of the bill, or the title, I should say, that was read once already is Customs (Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty) Act 2026. It is not a substantive permanent piece of legislation.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Yes, that it ends at three months.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Please play me a trailer.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

If anybody wants to take these points, please take them to the radio. All this says is that it's a temporary modification. It's not a permanent legislative amendment. So we all are saying the same thing. Let's move on.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

And Madam Speaker, I have not said anything, but with due respect, Madam Speaker, when a point is being made and it's being challenged, I understand you and you have authority within this House to say move on, but sometimes clarity is needed. Sometimes clarity is needed. Madam Speaker, I made a point recently about GST and electricity and persons were shocked because they thought that GST was up from electricity.

So, Madam Speaker, the other point, the other reason that we are here is to bring clarity to the listening public. And the clarity for me is to say that in three months, this relief package will end. In three months. If the government comes back and extends it for six months or for a year, so be it.

But as it stands, the relief package is for three months. And that's all I'm saying, Madam Speaker. I'm also saying, Madam Speaker, that during the summer, when the three months have finished, during that time, we're going to be running our fans, we're going to be running our ACs, our children will be going to school and at that time, because the fuel surcharge is $0.88 until Anglec chooses to do it differently, the amount might extend, hypothetically, the amount might extend and they might have to go up to $1.08,

Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Well, but that's the point I'm making, honourable member, which you know, we can't submit on hypotheticals. So I take your point that you want the government to be conscious that three months is not enough. That's the opposition's point. The point of order I'm ruling on is a point of order that says there's an objection to you suggesting that this is an end all permanent piece of legislation when it's not.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. Thank you. Madam Speaker, but at no point did I say it's a permanent measure. My point, Madam Speaker, and I'm thankful we have the Hansard and it can be checked after. I was making the point that in summer, when we are running our fans, when we are running our ACs, when this relief measure ends, because this is when the relief measure ends, that's in summertime, Madam Speaker.

That's the point I was making. And it's the only point I've been making, Madam Speaker. Has anything else? Both of us will be dealing in hypotheticals, Madam Speaker. But like I was saying also, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I recognize honourable member for Sandy Hill.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. On a point of order, Madam Speaker, and just to help move the conversation along because in my presentation I did state that it is not an untargeted concession without limit or structure. It is a temporary stabilization measure designed to cushion the impact of unusual and elevated external costs while preserving government's ability to monitor conditions carefully and reassess the position after the three month period expires. And so perhaps it is that if the member will continue and say.

TEMPORARY STABILIZATION MEASURE FOR ELECTRICITY COSTS

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you. On a point of order, just to help move the conversation along. In my presentation, I stated that this is not an untargeted concession without limit or structure. It is a temporary stabilization measure designed to cushion the impact of unusual and elevated external costs while preserving government's ability to monitor conditions carefully and reassess the position after the three-month period expires.

If the member will continue and say, in the event the Government of Anguilla does not extend, revisit, or reassess, then the council may go up. But short of saying that, it gives the public the impression that it comes to an end, the price doubles, and suddenly during the summer we will have the highest electricity prices. I think that is a misrepresentation. I invite the member to re-examine the statement and include if the government does not reassess.

Thank you.

POINT OF ORDER REGARDING SPECULATION IN SUBMISSIONS

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

No, Honourable Member for Allen Harbour, the point of order is not trying to dictate the presentation. The point of order is with respect to speculation. Submissions are not to be based on speculation. What you said prior to the first point of order was speculative and suggests this is a permanent amendment to the legislation.

You may clarify it however you wish.

GOVERNMENT RELIEF MEASURES AND BULK PETROLEUM LEVY DISCUSSION

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. I have exhausted the point, but as I said, this is a three-month measure, a three-month period of relief. We on this side are happy to be getting some relief. The people of Anguilla are happy to be getting some measure of relief.

But it remains a three-month period. In my previous point about gas, I noted that in April 2022, the decision was made to remove the excise tax and GST from fuel, and it was made from April through December 2022 and has been renewed every year since. This administration renewed it again in December 2025 for 2026. We know measures can be carried on, but we also know that when measures are made for such a short period, there is a reason for that.

Anguilla, being the largest shareholder in ANGLEC, obviously has to meet its bottom line. There is a $20 million US loan that must be paid back. Even though the fuel surcharge was not designed to be for profit, it can be used for profit because our administration negotiated with the last board to bring it down from $0.60 to $0.42.

Now we see it has jumped up again. In October 2024, Dr. Webster's administration gave over $3 million in electricity credits to the public. There was criticism, but we paid that directly to ANGLEC, covering the fuel surcharge, GST, and the bill itself. That meant over 6,000 households had $500 in their pockets to spend in the economy.

We did that three times, at least $3 million each time. We are seeing a fleet of initiatives again, and we are thankful for them, but they are working up to $3 million a month. Madam Speaker, I don't know if you've ever been to a church when the collection plate is about to be handed around.

We appreciate the jingles, but we prefer the people. These initiatives, along with others, amount to $10 million, as the Honourable Premier said. The Premier also said that for the first quarter we made $77 million from .ai alone, $26 million a month, when the budget predicted $21 million a month. So we are averaging $5 million more each month than budgeted.

I understand the Premier's point that with revenue-generating heads, you must be careful during lean months, but .ai operates regardless. If in January, February, and March, we have $5 million more each month, that's $15 million, and all the experts say it will continue. So while we can be careful with customs duties and other revenue, we already see what's happening with .ai.

Why not use that to ease the burden on the people? We are giving a measly $3 million back when .ai is bringing in $26 million, $5 million over budgeted. We know government can do more; the figures say so. That's the argument. When we were in government, in addition to electricity credits, we gave food vouchers, Senior Shield, Junior Shield, and $43 million in tax breaks for the people of Anguilla. $43 million went back into the pockets of the people. It's not novel for government to give tax breaks.

Everyone sees what's coming; this is not going to be overnight. It will operate for a while. The Honourable Premier also said that duties are not performing as well as they should. To paraphrase, is that happening because the reporting part has been removed, so we go back to the days of under-invoicing?

One reason for the disparity in GST collections in the initial stages was lack of data and under-invoicing. In St. Martin, they recognize the Anguillian accent and offer a special invoice. Many partook in that. When GST started, full reporting was required to get claim backs, so everyone had to report properly.

Now that the reporting part has been removed from the goods and services legislation, what is the incentive? Is that why customs is not performing better than expected? We appreciate the jingles, but we would prefer the people. We heard members speak of the quick turnaround and hard work to get this legislation here. We thank everyone involved: ministers, ministries, Executive Council. In December 2024, we agreed to remove the bulk petroleum levy.

Then members argued it would increase fuel prices, and we knew that, but also knew the measures we were operating under. People forget quickly; they say you had 4.5 years, but in 2020 it wasn't so. We were under immense pressure. As Dr. Webster said, once things improved, we could reduce the bulk petroleum levy from $750,000 to $200,000 per company. This was done in December 2024 for the budget. The bulk petroleum levy was not touched in 2025; it remained.

We are in March 2026, and the bulk petroleum levy is still there. Executive Council minutes don't come out as quickly as I'd like; sometimes we get them months later, sometimes not at all. But as of the last time I checked, the bulk petroleum levy is still there. When we were doing all this heavy lifting to come here today, it's a simple amendment as far as I see.

I recall when we were removing GST from entertainment, we came to the House three times in a week to make amendments. Why can't we get the amendment for the bulk petroleum levy? We are here for relief for the people of Anguilla. The more relief we can bring, the better. There is a bulk petroleum levy sitting there from 2024, factored into all revenue streams by the Ministry of Finance, but we can't remove it yet. 2025 has passed, we're in March 2026, maybe it will come later in the year after they pay it for the first quarter.

GOVERNMENT RING-FENCING FUNDS FOR UK PROPERTY PURCHASE AND RELIEF MEASURES

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

We are in March of 2026 and perhaps the 2025 pass will come later in the year. I suspect they are waiting for payment for the first quarter. Once it's paid, they'll remove it. We've been asking for this for a while. When the court fees were raised again, it was under pressure from what Esper was doing at the time. We have to ensure that the asphalt was recovered, that it was rescued. The fees, the ball grades, and again, the ten members on this side, the portfolios are killing

us. The port fees are killing us.

But in the point plans, we heard nothing addressing court fees; the same court fees are still there. The same port fees are still there. We haven't seen any changes. So when we on this side of the aisle say more can be done, literally more can be done. More can be done when $26 million is coming in every month from that AI and we are giving back the people $3 million. $26 million every month and we are giving back the people of Anguilla $3 million a month. Well, $3 million per month is over $10 million. So,

Madam Speaker, we also see: will this administration pedal to the metal, full speed ahead? The port is a house in the UK. Full speed ahead to purchase a house in the UK. Madam Speaker, I'm going to go on rough waters again because I personally feel that when my Premier, the Honourable Premier of Anguilla, makes a statement at a press conference, I should take it as a word unless she comes back the following week and says she was misquoted.

If our Honourable Premier makes a statement at a press conference, I will run with that. If the Minister of Finance makes a statement about our finances, I agree, I will run with that, because that's my Premier, Madam Speaker. That's the Honourable Premier. So when the Honourable Premier sits in a press conference and says that we ring-fenced $5 to $6 million US dollars, $16 million, to purchase a house in the UK, it might not have been said in here, but it was said by the Honourable Premier.

So I think I have the right to bring it in here. So again, we see about to pay $16 million in the UK for a house, and the Honourable Premier said that's going to be straight.

CLARIFICATION ON RING-FENCING FUNDS FOR UK PROPERTY PURCHASE

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am disappointed. I think the Honourable Member for North Hill does not understand the distinction between ring-fencing a certain sum, which is a general amount set aside, and the actual cost of an item. They are totally different. I want the people of Anguilla to understand that in December of 2025, I announced that as a result of the underspend in the 2025 Budget, the Government of Anguilla was able to ring-fence between $5 and $6 million US dollars for the purchase of a building in the UK.

When questions were asked by the Honourable Member of North Hill in the House of Assembly, he specifically asked what is the cost of the building and my response was that there was no purchase price as yet because we were still in the exploratory phase. As a result, there could be no figure attributed to the building at the time.

It is misleading for members of the opposition to give the public the impression that because we have ring-fenced a certain amount of money to accommodate the purchase of a government office in the UK, that is the cost of the building. That is incorrect. I ask members to refrain from misrepresenting and misleading the people of Anguilla. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER REGARDING GOVERNMENT PROPERTY PURCHASE STATEMENTS

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member for Road North, what is your response to the Honourable Premier's statement in respect of her point of order?

REFERENCE TO STATEMENTS MADE AT PRESS CONFERENCE REGARDING PROPERTY PURCHASE

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for that interjection. But I repeat, Madam Speaker, if I'm listening to a press conference and my Honourable Premier, my Honourable Minister for Economic Development, my Honourable Minister for Education, my Honourable Minister for Health make a statement, I take it as fact.

CLARIFICATION ON DATE OF REFERENCED PRESS CONFERENCE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

What date was the press conference that you're referring to? Just so that when she expands she can have a point of reference for herself?

DATE OF REFERENCED PRESS CONFERENCE

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

27th of January 2026, Madam Speaker.

CLARIFICATION OF TIMELINE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR REFERENCING EXTERNAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

27 January 2026 predates the questions that were posed on our Hansard. The meeting was convened on the 10th of February 2026, after your reference to a press conference on the 27th of January 2026. Question at 10:33 AM. Question 3: What is the total cost of the purchase, including fees, taxes, associated expenses, and from which budget lines will it be refinanced? This is on the website and on the Hansard.

Honourable member response from the Honourable Premier at 10:33 and 26 seconds: Madam Speaker, as of today,

government has not purchased any property in the United Kingdom and therefore no final purchase price has been set. For the avoidance of doubt, any proposed acquisition would be subject to a rigorous due diligence process designed to protect the public interest and ensure value for money. Nobody's trying to curtail your ability to reference things that you've heard, but when referencing things heard outside of this House, you must bring that material for me so I can rule on the point of order.

All I have is that you've confirmed you've heard this from the Premier on the 27th of January 2026, and all I have in front of me is what was said in response to your own questions on 10th February. You may respond.

CLARIFICATION ON RING-FENCED FUNDS AND REFERENCE TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I also have a snapshot of the points that were printed on the government's Facebook page, listing out when the Premier said that. But my point, Madam Speaker, is that there was money ring-fenced. That's the point I am speaking of, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Premier said that there's a $5 to $6 million ring-fenced for the house. In other words, Madam Speaker, there's a ballpark figure they're looking at.

Maybe they want me to use the $5 million, which is $13 million, but I'm using the high end.

SPEAKER'S GUIDANCE ON FACTUAL SUBMISSIONS

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I don't remember, and all members, I want people to submit on facts. I'm not going to entertain submissions on crystal balls because I don't have one.

OFFER TO SUBMIT SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

But, Madam Speaker, I can send it now to you, Madam Speaker, directly.

CLARIFICATION ON DISTINCTION BETWEEN ALLOCATION AND EXPENDITURE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

No, all I want to know is if you're making a statement and the point has been led from your leader. The suggestion was all day that there's a priority to spend this money on a house. If there's a priority to spend this money on a house, it's different from saying this money was spent on a house.

CLARIFICATION ON ALLOCATION VERSUS EXPENDITURE

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

That.

SPEAKER CLARIFIES THE POINT OF ORDER AND DEBATE CONTEXT

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I don't remember for Road South. Do you have a problem with me exploring the point of order with the Honourable Member? He's not debating the Speaker; he's clarifying the point of order that he's answering. Honourable Member for Road North, the point of order made all day, which nobody on this side agrees on, is that the government side is saying you cannot suggest, and the Honourable Leader has actually made a statement that he's since withdrawn, that $16 million is spent on a house. You're making that point to suggest that they can go further in their relief.

CLARIFICATION ON STATEMENTS REGARDING PROPERTY PURCHASE AND RELIEF

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker, again with all due respect, and we can check the Hansard. My point is I did not say that the monies were spent on the house. I said, and we can check back the Hansard, we are going full speed ahead looking to purchase a house in the UK. I referenced the Madam Premier where she said in a press conference that we have ring-fenced $5 to $6 million US. I did not at any point say that we've purchased the house.

The questions were asked in this Honourable House and they were clarified. We got a set of different answers that were made in the press conference and it was clarified. So at no point, Madam Speaker, did I say that we've purchased the house. I said if my Honourable Premier makes a statement in a press conference in public, I should be able to use that. I'm not saying that the house is purchased. I said, and we can go back and check the Hansard, I said full speed ahead to purchase the house in the UK, looking at it for $16 million, but they're giving the people of Anguilla $3 million in relief. I did not say that the house was purchased, and I'm saying the $6 million is based, Madam Speaker, on the press conference.

I have the notes here that I'm looking at that was printed on the Government of Anguilla Facebook page.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSE FROM MEMBER FOR

SANDER HILL

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member for Sander Hill, your response?

CLARIFICATION ON RING-FENCING AND PROPERTY COST

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The idea behind ring-fencing means that you've secured or set aside that amount. It doesn't mean that the property is costing that sum. Once the sale has been entered, it could be $2 million, it could be $3 million. It doesn't have to be the full $6 million. The ring-fencing is simply set aside to allow that space, but it doesn't mean that the building is going to cost that amount. So I would ask the members to refrain from attempting to mislead the public because at the end of the day, the public is being fed the misinformation that the property costs $16 million.

I would ask the members to speak based on facts and not on supposition. Thank you.

SPEAKER INVITES RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS STATEMENT

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

You might want to let your colleague know that he will have his opportunity to submit. You are perfectly able to submit an answer on your own. Do you have a response to the Honourable Member's statement about the point you're making?

CLARIFICATION ON RING-FENCED FUNDS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Yes, Madam Speaker. In the same way that the Honourable Premier, Member for Sandy Hill, is saying it can cost $2 million, it can cost $10 million, it could cost the people of Anguilla $12 million, because she's basing it on a hypothetical. That's like I am basing it on a hypothetical, but I am not using a hypothetical, Madam Speaker.

My Honourable Premier sat in a press conference in January of this year and knowingly, Madam Speaker, because we were in January and we couldn't be using underspend from the previous year. What my Honourable Premier said was that monies were ring-fenced, $5 to $6 million. At no point did I say the house is purchased.

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS AND BUILDING PURCHASE CLARIFICATION

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

What my honourable premier said was that bunnies were ring-fenced for $5 to $6 million. At no point did I say the House is passing. That money, at no point did I say that we purchased it. What I said is that we were full speed ahead looking to purchase this building and we are giving the people $3 million in relief.

That's my point, Madam Speaker. And again, when we check back the Hansard, if I did say we purchased, then I would have to apologize, but I know I did not say purchase. I say we are full speed ahead, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I did not report it. Honourable member for Sandy Hill, the response is that the honourable member for Road North feels that it's appropriate for him to say that your priorities are misplaced because it's in respect of the House that might likely cost upwards of 16 or less or more and that your priorities right now should be to do more in the relief, that's what you're saying? Do you find that objectionable if it's said in that way?

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Your ways matter.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Do you find that objectionable if it's said in that way?

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Madam Speaker, I think that the member has adequately expressed to the public that ring-fencing doesn't mean that there's been a purchase. He has also acknowledged that it does not mean that we've indicated that's what the building in the UK would cost. As a result, I think he has adequately expressed to the public the facts, and I'm speaking in relation to the full speed ahead.

I came to the public in relation to the acquisition of a building in the UK. December of 2025 and we're now in April of 2026. So I don't know what speed the member...

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

So the point he's only trying to make as we now see it, I think we are all going to agree, I think that the prorogation period, we kind of forgot that we cannot submit on hypotheticals. We

are all going to agree that there's no house purchased. There's a ring-fencing, it does not mean it's bought. But the point that the honourable member is making is that he would prefer that the priority be on more relief as opposed to the House.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

And no figure. Yes, and that is why we're here too, Madam Speaker, but thank you.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

We all want the same things, whether you think you're debating the Speaker or not. We're just trying to clarify that one. You know that I'm not going to let you submit on hypotheticals, but I understand the point you're making and I think the member now understands the point you're making.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Not the same thing. Madam Speaker, you know I will always yield to your wisdom. Always. Madam Speaker. It also raises the point. Then what can I trust from my leaders at press conferences then?

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Remember now, we ended at a good place a while ago. Let's stay on that good place. If you're going to bring anything about press conferences in the future, you're going to have to bring the transcript for me because I don't watch any of them. So let's stay on the good notes.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

No problem, Madam Speaker, I will send this to the Clerk and the others so that it can be printed, just to refresh the other members on the other side so that they can see it was said.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

No, of course. But the press conference you're referring to, if I accept it because I haven't seen it, it was January and the answers that I have, I'm only going to go by what's in front of me. So in the future, you're perfectly fine to bring whatever you want, but you can't just make things up and say that you were here and or say that that was done if you don't bring it.

OK, move on.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

As usual, will be led by your wisdom again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, that was very close to the end. I think I'm finishing up. I wasn't supposed to take this long, actually. I think the point of orders were longer than my presentation, actually. Madam Speaker. Also in the 2026 budget, there's a $40.5 million a month. $40.5 million to purchase what we call the old NBA building, which now houses government offices.

Coincidentally, I think that's the same amount that is online or whatever the situation is with Bank of Dominica. $40.5 million. Where did that figure come from? We don't know. Because in the committee stage at Budget, Madam Speaker, when we asked the Director of Lands if a survey has been done, what was the reason to come up with this figure, there was none.

There was none at the time, Madam Speaker, but there's a budget line item for $40.5 million. And Madam Speaker, it can be argued, and it has been argued, that building already belongs to the Government of Anguilla, paid for in the banking resolution. So why are we proceeding to burden the taxpayers of Anguilla with $40.5 million for a building that they already paid for? $40.5 million,

Madam Speaker, you know how many months of relief that could bring, especially if you're only doing $3 million a month. That's about, I don't know, 16 months, a year and a half. Maybe somebody could do a quick maths for me. But $40.5 million, Madam Speaker, think of what that can do for the people of Anguilla.

And then, Madam Speaker, should we not rethink the budget? Should a supplementary be coming? Because there's still that $73 million that is planned to be taken from the reserves. $73 million is planned to be taken from the reserves and there are different plans that you hear that we know at some point in time we're going to have to be here for a supplementary. That is going to increase our $601 million total budget. Because when purchases are made in the UK, whether it's for $2 million, whether it's for $3 million, there's going to be a recurrent cost, Madam Speaker.

And annually the Government of Anguilla is going to have to be paying taxes to the UK every year once that building is charged. I'm not going to call the figure because figures seem to be getting me in trouble this evening. So I won't mention a figure.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

No, not figures. Speculating is getting you into problems today, but you're speculating.

Hon.Premier Cora Richardson Hodge:

Thank you again, Madam Speaker. But there's going to be a cost. And if there's going to be a recurring cost, we have to come back to this House for a supplementary. So I'm suggesting when we come back with a supplementary, cuts and checks and makers, like I said, we just have to turn on our news and we're going to realize that this is not a... this war is not going to be over tomorrow.

I can't predict how long it will be, but it won't be over tomorrow. So we have to rethink whatever amount we are going to be spending on that house in the UK. The first cost and the recurring cost, that $40.5 million that we are going to purchase a building that we already purchased for in the Banking Resolution. That cost this entire country over a half a billion dollars that we are still paying down on but we want to purchase that building again. The $73 million that we are about to take from reserves, maybe that $73 million that they want to take from reserves to balance the budget, again, we could look at spreading that over time to go back into the people's pockets.

We are thankful, we appreciate the jingles, but we would definitely prefer the paper, Madam Speaker. So when we say that more can be done, we are not just pulling it out of any body part, we know more can be done. Dot AI is overperforming by $5 million a month and we are giving – this is the overperformance of the dot AI, I'm not talking about what is coming in on a regular, just the overperformance – and we are giving back $3 million, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I know we can do both. Madam Speaker, in a press release yesterday we saw that customs is urging members of the public to monitor their receipts, to report if there's any misgivings, but Madam Speaker, I wonder if these changes are going to go where I think they are targeting, because I think we are targeting more than anything food cost, because everybody doesn't have to drive.

Matter of fact, this might be a good time to get bikes again and get exercise. Everybody doesn't have to drive, so we don't have to worry about gas, but everybody has to eat. And again, I could be wrong but I think I saw in the press release, we are capping that 42 cents for domestic and we are looking at residential but I don't remember seeing anything specific about supermarkets and someone please stand up on a point of order if there is something specific for the supermarkets.

Hon Cora Richardson-Hodge:

On a point of order, Madam Speaker, and just because the member has asked, the press release would have said domestic consumers and what that meant in government terms is domestic meaning within the country, which means that – the easy way to look at it is for the accommodation sector, hotels, villas, guest houses, pay 65 cents per kilowatt hour and everyone else pays 42 cents per kilowatt hour.

That includes supermarkets, thanks.

Hon.Merrick Richardson:

Thank you for the explanation, Honourable Premier, but my point remains, Madam Speaker, that fuel surcharge, that fuel surcharge, that fuel surcharge. We can laugh all we want on the other side but that 88 cents, like I said somebody told me years ago when oil goes up, it goes up like a rocket, but it comes down like a feather. It takes forever to come down. The Honourable Single Island Wide Member just said Anglec have a twenty. He did not say the amount so I don't want to quote him but he said just last week Anglec signed to move forward with that loan from CDB.

That loan has to be paid, Anglec has to meet their bottom line, they are a private company. They're going to look at their profits. That fuel surcharge that increased by over 100 percent. Unless government plans for the next few years to keep covering that, that fuel surcharge that's going to be a problem for us.

So Madam Speaker, I close by saying, we like the jingles. We appreciate the jingles but we would have definitely preferred a little bit more paper. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Thank you, honourable Member. Does any other Member wish to speak? I recognize the Honourable member for Road South.

CUSTOMS (TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY) ACT, 2026 - DEBATE

Hon.Mr. Haydn Hughes:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it was the member, the Single Island-Wide Member, Mr. Jose Vanterpool, who said that he thought we'd be here for a quick 30 minute session and be out and we've been here for over three hours thus far, Madam Speaker, and it seems as if we're going to be in here beyond sunset.

We're here to debate a bill, Madam Speaker, shortly entitled, a bill for the Customs (Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty) Act, 2026, and we have suspended the rules of procedure to allow for the first, second and third reading. I believe the Single Island-Wide Member said that because he recognized that there will be a unanimous position as it relates to granting this sort of relief, Madam Speaker, because the Anguilla Progressive Movement have showed time and time again that even though in the opposition benches, which won't be permanent because nobody is in government permanent, whether it's Denzel Douglas, Kaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Hubert Hughes, Victor Banks, Osburne Fleming or Emile Gumbs or James Ronald Webster.

Nobody is in power forever, and nobody is in opposition forever. And Madam Speaker, the Anguilla Progressive

Movement has demonstrated time and time again that every time something comes to this honourable house that is good for the people of Anguilla, we are in full support of it and this is no different, but all we are saying is that it does not go far enough.

And we're saying that for a number of reasons and there can be no hypocrisy around it because time and time again as members of the government of Anguilla, Madam Speaker, we have shown that we have come to this honourable house time and time again to change tax structures, to remove duties, to remove GST on a number of issues,

Madam Speaker. Let us go back further to the GST bill, Madam Speaker, a number of us sat in executive council, Madam Speaker, when the GST bill was being proposed. One of those persons is now sitting in the government's benches and that's Honourable Kyle Hodge, who was a minister of economic development in the Anguilla Progressive Movement Administration, Madam Speaker, and when the studies and all the analysis came back and they were insisting that we should go to the 17%.

As a matter of fact, the government's financial adviser at the time, Mr. Steven Turnbull, continuously stated that we should go to the 17% and not the lowest floor of 13% because 13% was the lowest floor that you can go to and we insisted all of us unanimously including the Honourable Kyle Hodge that we should go to the lowest floor and he said the reason why we should go to the highest ceiling which is 17% is because if we did not meet those figures, he did not believe we could meet those figures. And if we did not meet those figures, then it would be politically damaging to come back to the people to raise the GST from 13% upwards to 17%.

I could understand his argument, but we insisted unanimously that as executive council, yes, we do cherish your advice and because we liked his advice because he was a good guy. But we are taking our chances and we're going with the lowest possible floor, Madam Speaker. And it goes beyond that, Madam Speaker, because when we were bullish on the possibilities of tourism,

Madam Speaker, when we developed the bubble and we didn't develop the bubble on our own, there was a lot of people who worked with us to develop the bubble including hoteliers who we met every Friday afternoon at 4:00. Every Friday religiously at 4:00 we met with the hospitality sector, Madam Speaker, and we had a lot of consultation and Quincia Gumbs-Marie was the lead person in operating the bubble and people were very critical of it because we were opening the country to economic opportunities,

Madam Speaker, and the Honourable Member for Valley North, she also supported that position of reopening the country through the bubble process, Madam Speaker, 100% she was on board with us on that. And Madam Speaker, when I was very bullish on the possibility of us quickly regaining our stature as a leading luxury hospitality destination, the outside advisors who sat in executive council did not.

They said, "No, we will not get back to those levels, we will not be able to command the average daily rate" and I said, "Yes we will, yes we can". Madam Speaker, and just a few weeks ago, I was on a radio show, and I said to the people of Anguilla that I am extremely confident and bullish on Anguilla's tourism prospects.

I am even more confident about Anguilla's tourism growth today than I was yesterday, Madam Speaker. And it is because of the crisis that the world is seeing. It is because of what has happened in Iran, Madam Speaker, why we will continually see record numbers of tourism into this country.

Our tourism numbers will continue to grow and in so doing, the coffers of the government of Anguilla, the coffers of the people of Anguilla will continue to grow and expand exponentially and that is why we say the government can do more because what has happened in the Middle East is something that was predictable.

So, when the Honourable Premier said in a press conference in March of this year that she didn't think that that would have an impact on Anguilla, that was not looking at the tea leaves, Madam Speaker, and what was happening. Because for many years Iran have said to everyone in particular the United States of America, if you so attack us, we will attack American interest in the region.

And if you go back to 1974, Madam Speaker, when the king of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement for the petrodollar, thus requiring every country in the world to hold US dollars into trade dollars and Rick Nixon coming off the gold standard thereafter, Madam Speaker, it means therefore that America was strong in all of those Gulf states, UAE, Saudi, Qatar, Dubai, etc.

All of them were in the hands of the United States of America. Every one of them had bases in the United States. Every one of them had significant investments in their particular country. So much so, Madam Speaker, that Dubai that was an oil rich nation completely diversified the economy into services and tourism.

Went heavily into services and tourism so much so that the Dubai International Airport was one of the most visited airports in the world, Madam Speaker, a lot of American investment, you had the data centers, Amazon, you name it, all investing in that part of the world. 90% of the population of the UAE is outside of the UAE,

Madam Speaker. Significant immigrants and so forth and Iran said these are the things that we will do. Saudi Arabia said these are the things that will happen, everybody said these are the things that will happen, Madam Speaker. But for whatever reasons that we know that we can't speak of in this honourable house, the United States decided and another country that you can't call its name decided that it should attack Iran and what did Iran do, Iran did exactly what Iran said it would do, which was predictable and Trump said, "Well, I didn't expect them to do what they said they would do". And what they did was attack all of these US interests in the United Arab Emirates and one of the things that we must remember that it was about two or three years ago that Saudi Arabia announced that they were going to diversify heavily into tourism, investing over a trillion dollars to develop a

tourism belt,

Madam Speaker, and lifting a 76-year ban on drinking alcohol in Saudi Arabia in preparation for this tourism boom that they were expecting because you know Mecca and Medina are heavily visited tourism sites. And Dubai was a site that most people visited and love to visit. There are people in this house who have been to Dubai. I haven't, but not because I didn't want to go. My opportunity is now lost.

But that's okay, Madam Speaker, because all of those people, especially those affluent people who are traveling to Dubai, will be coming to the most beautiful destination in the Caribbean and perhaps in the world, and that is the country of Anguilla. The only things that we need to do is ensure that we don't have any crime and violence, in particular gun-related violence, and we need to clean up our country and get rid of all the litter and I'm not blaming any government, that is each and every one of our own personal responsibility to keep this country clean, Madam Speaker, so we are positioned—short of our country deciding to shoot down fishing boats in the Caribbean—we are geographically positioned and we have all of the infrastructure, and I'm not talking about physical infrastructure, I'm talking about the people infrastructure to be great,

Madam Speaker, we're going to do great in terms of tourism numbers. And Madam Speaker, when I look at the tourism numbers that are produced by the stats department, you know what I see month after month? Record numbers and let me tell you something, Madam Speaker, those numbers are going to continue to grow.

Record numbers year over year to the point where we were working to ensure that this island does not have a two-month close down or a six-week close down, that we'll have tourism year-round. So, if you couple that with the revenue that is being generated from the hospitality sector in the General Services Tax, which should be record levels, record levels of money trickling into the treasury every month from the General Services Tax from the hospitality sector,

Madam Speaker, and if you couple that with the record levels of monies that are trickling into the treasury from dot AI, it means therefore, Madam Speaker, that the government of Anguilla can do more. And Madam Speaker, I say that to say this: in 2010, when the Anguilla United Movement (AUM) came to office,

Madam Speaker, there was no budget in place in 2010, but we had to collect monies, Madam Speaker. And at the end of 2010, the government of Anguilla collected $155 million EC dollars. Today we are doubling that in dot AI alone. Couple that with record levels of funds emanating from the hospitality plan into the treasury, it means that the budget that the Honourable Premier presented may not even be real because it contemplates a deficit of $73 million dollars. It may be a surplus of $100 million dollars.

It could quite possibly be a surplus of $100 million dollars and dot AI reached a million users some time ago. Identity Digital was able to do a tremendous job with that, Madam Speaker, the contract is not yet public, and I understand why the government of Anguilla has not made it public just like I understand why the previous APM administration did not make it public.

Madam Speaker, I can see that by 2030 dot AI bringing into the treasury of Anguilla at least a billion EC dollars, so think about this: dot AI bringing in a billion dollars in 2030, but in 2010, government of Anguilla only brought in $155 million dollars. So, tell me, how is it hypocritical to say that the government of Anguilla can do more?

How, Madam Speaker? So, what did the government of the opposition led by the honourable leader of the Anguilla Progressive Movement state that we should do? He said we should reduce the duties. He said we should cap the freight, we're here talking about that today. He said we should provide electricity credits. He said we should remove the USL Universal Social Levy, which was precursor to the ISL, the interim stabilization levy of 3%.

He said we should provide direct investment in Anguilla, and we even go further—remove property tax from the businesses in Anguilla except for the hospitality sector, in terms of villas and hotels. That is not unreasonable, Madam Speaker. That is not unreasonable, given the fact that the government of Anguilla in 2026 is going to see more money, more revenue into that treasury than at any time in the history of Anguilla and I foresee that it's going to be surpassed in 2027 and 2028 and 2029 and 2030. So, the government of Anguilla indeed has the fiscal space to do so because if you compare that to what Dr. Ellis Lorenzo's administration did in terms of electricity credits.

Every electricity credit—1,2,3,4,5,6—each one of them valued upwards of $6 million dollars, Madam Speaker. So, do the math and how could it be hypocritical to do more when this administration of the Anguilla Progressive Movement brought to the people of Anguilla Senior Shield, where every person over the age of 70 doesn't have to pay any cost in terms of public sector cost for their medical care, whatever it is, dentistry, elective, selective, surgery, diagnostics, whatever it is, and then went further with Junior Shield and the plan was eventually you'll have a national health insurance covering every single individual in this country,

Madam Speaker. How is it hypocritical to say we couldn't do more when the Anguilla Progressive Movement decided that it was important that our pre-primary school teachers be paid more? And the government of Anguilla under the leadership of Dr. Ellis Lorenzo Webster provided the capital to ensure that they were paid more. But how did it happen? It didn't only happen because of dot AI, you know, it happened because of the GST. And we're here talking about oh the GST now allows for people to eat more at the restaurants and so forth,

Madam Speaker. When every single restaurant in Anguilla has increased their menu cost significantly, Madam Speaker, every single one has increased their menu cost. Every one, you're paying more and when we talk about the business community, some of us in here are in business. I know my good colleague over there, Mr. Cordell Richardson and I, we have been in business for some time. I know Kyle Hodge, he has been in business and I would still like to eat some Cajun

Goat but, we are in business, Madam Speaker.

And I can tell you that the business cost has gone up since GST has gone. The business cost of concrete companies has gone up since this GST relief that has been implemented. Madam Speaker, so don't tell me that it's a good thing because here it is,

Madam Speaker. We're talking about data here now. Jim Jones grocery store paid 13% on their services, Jim Jones paid 13% on his security cost. He paid 13% on his electricity cost. He paid 13% on his telecommunication cost and so forth. Madam Speaker, Jim Jones now knowing that he's going to get this rebate, Jim Jones decides that he's not going to add that GST in his upfront cost because now, it's not an operating cost.

But today, Madam Speaker, under this new regime, the 13% on all those services that Jones's store has to use are now an operating cost and so the cost of food, the cost of goods and services have gone up. Show your invoices, show your receipts, they have gone up. So, the people are asked to pay more.

Madam Speaker, so you can't say it's hypocrisy to ask the people that the government of Anguilla should do more. Madam Speaker, the Single Island-Wide Member spoke about Anglec and electricity and renewable energy. The Chairman of the board of Anglec today is one Mr. David Carty. The Chairman of the board of Anglec when we, the Anguilla Progressive Movement, was in office at one point was David Carty and David Carty held a town hall style meeting along with the CEO at the time, Mr. Sutcliff Hodge, and David Carty told the people of Anguilla, in order for Anglec to move forward with a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank, it must have the government of Anguilla's blessings on it, signature. Because what they are not telling you is that the position then and the position now are different in that the government of Anguilla have reached a place based on the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility Act that they don't have to go to London like a little dog anymore.

And hopefully this United Front Administration will be the administration that takes us into political independence. I'll support that too. I don't care who takes us into independence as long as we get there. And Madam Speaker, that is the difference, it was the same Single Island-Wide Member, Mr. Jose Vanterpool, who stood up in this house in November of 2025 and he said by December of 2025 the Caracus Building would be completed and operational for January 1st 2026 in order to be their office building, he said that.

He said it was important for that building to be bought in order to facilitate renewable energy integration. When I drive by the Caracas Building, when I go to buy my aronel water, Madam Speaker, the best water on the planet, shameless plug, Madam Speaker, when I go by there, when I look to the left, if I'm driving towards Stoney Ground or if I look to the right, if I'm driving towards Lakes World, I see a dugout shell,

Madam Speaker. And we are in April of 2026, Madam Speaker, April of 2026. Like I said, we are not here to oppose this bill. We are here to support this bill, but our position remains that the government of Anguilla can and should do more. When the vote comes to the house, you would hear a number of ayes. You won't hear any nays, Madam Speaker, because we all support this bill, and we believe it should be permanent.

We believe it should be permanent and to say we don't know what's going to happen next week. When we have a precedent that is predictable and to say that what the premier of Anguilla says in a press conference holds weight. When Trump says what he says on a Friday, the markets react. When he says what he says, the markets react.

The markets react when he's standing in front of the door of Airforce One and says something like, "I'm going to take Cuba, we're negotiating with new head of Iran and we're going to have a ceasefire deal". The markets react and then Iran comes out with some Lego cartoons and said, "We don't know who Trump is talking about" and the market reacts again. The markets react based on what the leader of the country says, whether it's Trump or whether it's the Honourable Premier of Anguilla, Madam Speaker, because it was the honourable chief minister in 2006, Mr. Osbourne Burlington Fleming, who said to the people of Anguilla, "Go to the banks and borrow and build, we will facilitate those loans" and guess what?

The people of Anguilla from Island Harbour to West End from Shoal Bay to the Forest went to the banks and borrowed and built. And you know who was one of the directors of the National Bank of Anguilla, Madam Speaker? The now Honourable Cora Richardson-Hodge, but I digress. But they went to the banks, Madam Speaker, and they borrowed and built and in 2007,

Madam Speaker, the National Bank of Anguilla boasted that they had a billion dollars in assets. Madam Speaker, and we are building a west branch. I said on a radio show when that west branch started, I said, "They're building the bank for me" because I live right next to the bank and National Bank of Anguilla is my bank, I love that bank. You know, I could call up the bank on a Monday and have a loan by the Thursday. I loved it. It was a good time to be banking in Anguilla back in those days, Madam Speaker.

So, I too can say that I borrowed, I don't know how many times I borrowed from the National Bank of Anguilla, but it's a lot, too numerous to mention, Madam Speaker, thank God for the National Bank of Anguilla. Madam Speaker, by 2009 the bank had basically collapsed.

So much so that Osbourne Fleming, Victor Banks and Evans Mc'Neil Rogers were in a press conference and the United Front administration said to England, "Come for your country, come for your country" since you weren't allowing us to borrow to get out of the situation we're in now, come for your country.

When we went down to the National Bank of Anguilla building, we went upstairs, it was an empty shell, not even the walls inside were plastered. Everything looked pretty from the outside. Inside was empty like some people, Madam Speaker, and Madam Speaker, in 2009, they created a company called

ASSICO, Anguilla

Social Security Company Limited, Madam Speaker, and through that vehicle, they took $20 million dollars to purchase a Cinnamon Reef property that had a valuation in the good times of $2.71 million and that was to provide liquidity for the National Bank of Anguilla, Madam Speaker, and things were falling apart quickly and in July, June of 2009, the Anguilla United Front through Executive Council approved the Anguilla Fiscal Recovery Plan 2009 to 2011 and in that they spoke about payroll tax, goods and services tax, accommodation tax increases, property tax increases, resort, residential, assets, it went on.

But Osbourne Fleming said, the Anguilla United Front said we will not be bringing any budget to the house. Whoever government comes in office in 2010, they'll have to bring their budget. Unprecedented. Unprecedented because it doesn't matter. In 2029, I believe that—and this is speculation and we talk a lot about speculation—that in 2029, the Anguilla United Front will bring a budget to the house regardless of what the political consequences are in 2030 in terms of an election in 2030. I believe they will because it was the only time that that happened, Madam Speaker, and guess why it happened?

Because the British government and the FCDO, the Foreign and Colonial Office, said to the government of Anguilla in writing in October 2009, listen, you don't have to bring any budget, you don't have to put these taxes in place. I'm paraphrasing here. You can wait until after the elections to do these things to the people and they agreed. But in January of 2010, another letter was sent and this one addressed to the minister of finance who was Victor Banks in the United Front administration along the same lines and also speaking of the fishing arrangements with St. Martin that the member for West End when he was campaigning in 2005, Mr. Cardigan Connor said that when he gets in office, knowing the importance of the fishing industry to the fishermen in West End, he will work out…

DEBATE ON CUSTOMS (TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY) ACT, 2026

Hon.Mr. Haydn Hughes:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it was the Single Island-Wide Member, Mr. Jose Vanterpool, who said that he thought we'd be here for a quick 30-minute session and be out, and we've been here for over three hours thus far, Madam Speaker, and it seems as if we're going to be in here beyond sunset.

We're here to debate a bill shortly entitled, a bill for the Customs (Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty) Act, 2026, and we have suspended the rules of procedure to allow for the first, second, and third readings. I believe the Single Island-Wide Member said that because he recognized there would be a unanimous position as it relates to granting this sort of relief, Madam Speaker, because the Anguilla Progressive Movement has shown time and time again that even though in the opposition benches—which won't be permanent because nobody is in government permanent—whether it's Denzel Douglas, Kaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Hubert Hughes, Victor Banks, Osburne Fleming, Emile Gumbs, or James Ronald Webster, nobody is in power forever, and nobody is in opposition forever.

The Anguilla Progressive Movement has demonstrated time and time again that every time something comes to this Honourable House that is good for the people of Anguilla, we are in full support of it, and this is no different. But all we are saying is that it does not go far enough. We're saying that for a number of reasons, and there can be no hypocrisy around it because time and time again, as members of the government of Anguilla, we have shown that we have come to this Honourable House to change tax structures, to remove duties, to remove GST on a number of issues, Madam Speaker.

Let us go back further to the GST bill, Madam Speaker. A number of us sat in Executive Council when the GST bill was being proposed, and one of those persons is now sitting in the government's benches, Honourable Kyle Hodge, who was a Minister of Economic Development in the Anguilla Progressive Movement Administration. When the studies and all the analysis came back, they were insisting that we should go to 17%. As a matter of fact, the government's financial adviser at the time, Mr. Steven Turnbull, continuously stated that we should go to 17% and not the lowest floor of 13%, because 13% was the lowest floor that you could go to. We insisted, all of us unanimously, including Honourable Kyle Hodge, that we should go to the lowest floor.

He said the reason why we should go to the highest ceiling, which is 17%, is because if we did not meet those figures, it would be politically damaging to come back to the people to raise the GST from 13% upwards to 17%. I could understand his argument, but we insisted unanimously that as Executive Council, yes, we do cherish your advice, and because we liked his advice—he was a good guy—but we are taking our chances and we're going with the lowest possible floor, Madam Speaker.

It goes beyond that, Madam Speaker, because when we were bullish on the possibilities of tourism, when we developed the bubble, we didn't develop the bubble on our own. There were a lot of people who worked with us, including hoteliers who we met every Friday afternoon at 4:00. Every Friday, religiously at 4:00, we met with the hospitality sector, Madam Speaker, and we had a lot of consultation.

Quincia Gumbs-Marie was the lead person in operating the bubble, and people were very critical of it because we were opening the country to economic opportunities. The Honourable Member for Valley North also supported that position of reopening the country through the bubble process, Madam Speaker—100% she was on board.

When I was bullish on the possibility of us quickly regaining our stature as a leading luxury hospitality destination, the outside advisors who sat in Executive Council did not agree. They said, "No, we will not get back to those levels, we will not be able to command the average daily rate." I said, "Yes we will, yes we can." Just a few weeks ago, Madam Speaker, I was on a radio show, and I said to the people of Anguilla that

I am extremely confident and bullish on Anguilla's tourism prospects.

I am even more confident about Anguilla's tourism growth today than I was yesterday, Madam Speaker. It is because of the crisis that the world is seeing, because of what has happened in Iran, Madam Speaker, why we will continually see record numbers of tourism into this country. Our tourism numbers will continue to grow, and in so doing, the coffers of the government and the people of Anguilla will continue to grow and expand exponentially.

That is why we say the government can do more, because what has happened in the Middle East is something that was predictable. So, when the Honourable Premier said in a press conference in March of this year that she didn't think that would have an impact on Anguilla, that was not looking at the tea leaves,

Madam Speaker. For many years, Iran has said to everyone, in particular the United States of America, if you attack us, we will attack American interests in the region. If you go back to 1974, when the King of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement for the petrodollar, thus requiring every country in the world to hold US dollars to trade dollars, and Rick Nixon coming off the gold standard thereafter, it means America was strong in all of those Gulf states—UAE, Saudi, Qatar, Dubai, etc.

All of them were in the hands of the United States of America. Every one of them had bases in the United States, significant investments in their countries. Dubai, an oil-rich nation, completely diversified the economy into services and tourism, so much so that the Dubai International Airport was one of the most visited airports in the world.

A lot of American investment—data centers, Amazon, you name it—all investing in that part of the world. 90% of the population of the UAE is outside of the UAE, Madam Speaker. Significant immigrants and so forth. Iran said these are the things that we will do. Saudi Arabia said these are the things that will happen. Everybody said these are the things that will happen, Madam Speaker.

But for whatever reasons that we know we can't speak of in this Honourable House, the United States decided, and another country that you can't call its name decided, that it should attack Iran. What did Iran do? Iran did exactly what it said it would do, which was predictable, and Trump said, "Well, I didn't expect them to do what they said they would do." What they did was attack all of these US interests in the United Arab Emirates. We must remember that about two or three years ago, Saudi Arabia announced they were going to diversify heavily into tourism, investing over a trillion dollars to develop a tourism belt, and lifting a 76-year ban on drinking alcohol in Saudi Arabia in preparation for this tourism boom.

Mecca and Medina are heavily visited tourism sites. Dubai was a site that most people visited and love to visit. There are people in this House who have been to Dubai. I haven't, but not because I didn't want to go. My opportunity is now lost. But that's okay, Madam Speaker, because all of those people, especially those affluent people who are traveling to Dubai, will be coming to the most beautiful destination in the Caribbean and perhaps in the world, and that is Anguilla.

The only things we need to do are ensure that we don't have any crime and violence, in particular gun-related violence, and we need to clean up our country and get rid of all the litter. I'm not blaming any government; that is each and every one of our own personal responsibility to keep this country clean, Madam Speaker.

We are geographically positioned and have all of the infrastructure—and I'm not talking about physical infrastructure, I'm talking about the people infrastructure—to be great, Madam Speaker. We're going to do great in terms of tourism numbers. When I look at the tourism numbers produced by the stats department, you know what I see month after month? Record numbers, and those numbers are going to continue to grow. Record numbers year over year, to the point where we are working to ensure that this island does not have a two-month or six-week close down, that we'll have tourism year-round. If you couple that with the revenue being generated from the hospitality sector in the general services tax, which should be at record levels, and the record levels of monies trickling into the treasury every month from the general services tax from the hospitality sector, and if you couple that with the record levels of monies trickling into the treasury from dot AI, it means the government of Anguilla can do more.

In 2010, when the Anguilla United Movement came to office, there was no budget in place, but we had to collect monies. At the end of 2010, the government collected $155 million EC dollars. Today, we are doubling that in dot AI alone. Couple that with record levels of funds from the hospitality plan into the treasury, it means that the budget the Honourable Premier presented may not even be real because it contemplates a deficit of $73 million dollars.

It may be a surplus of $100 million dollars. Dot AI reached a million users some time ago. Identity Digital was able to do a tremendous job with that, Madam Speaker. The contract is not yet public, and I understand why the government has not made it public, just like I understand why the previous APM administration did not make it public. By 2030, dot AI could bring into the treasury of Anguilla at least a billion EC dollars, Madam Speaker.

So think about this: dot AI bringing in a billion dollars in 2030, but in 2010, government only brought in $155 million dollars. So, tell me, how is it hypocritical to say that the government can do more? What did the opposition led by the Honourable Leader of the Anguilla Progressive Movement state that we should do? He said we should reduce the duties, cap the freight, provide electricity credits, remove the Universal Social Levy, provide direct investment in Anguilla, and even go further—remove property tax from the businesses in Anguilla except for the hospitality sector. That is not unreasonable, Madam Speaker, given the fact that the government in 2026 is going to see more money, more revenue into the treasury than at any time in the history of Anguilla, and I foresee that it's going to be surpassed in 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030.

The government indeed has the fiscal space to do so, because if you compare that to what Dr. Ellis Lorenzo's administration did in terms of electricity credits—each one of

them valued upwards of $6 million dollars, Madam Speaker—do the math. How could it be hypocritical to do more when this administration brought to the people of Anguilla Senior Shield, where every person over the age of 70 doesn't have to pay any cost for their medical care, and then went further with Junior Shield, and the plan was eventually to have a national health insurance covering every single individual in this country? How is it hypocritical to say we couldn't do more when the Anguilla Progressive Movement decided that it was important that our pre-primary school teachers be paid more, and the government provided the capital to ensure that they were paid more? But how did it happen? It didn't only happen because of dot AI, it happened because of the GST.

We're here talking about how the GST now allows for people to eat more at restaurants, when every single restaurant in Anguilla has increased their menu cost significantly, Madam Speaker. Every one, you're paying more. When we talk about the business community, some of us in here are in business. I know my good colleague Mr. Cordell Richardson and I have been in business for some time. I know Kyle Hodge has been in business, and I would still like to eat some Cajun Goat, but we are in business, Madam Speaker.

I can tell you that the business cost has gone up since GST has gone in. The business cost of concrete companies has gone up since this GST relief has been implemented. So don't tell me that it's a good thing, because here it is, Madam Speaker. We're talking about data. Jim Jones grocery store paid 13% on their services—security, electricity, telecommunication, and so forth.

Jim Jones, knowing he's going to get this rebate, decides not to add that GST in his upfront cost because now it's not an operating cost. But today, under this new regime, the 13% on all those services that Jones's store has to use are now an operating cost, and so the cost of food, goods, and services have gone up.

Show your invoices, show your receipts—they have gone up. So the people are asked to pay more. So you can't say it's hypocrisy to ask that the government should do more. The Single Island-Wide Member spoke about Anglec and electricity and renewable energy. The Chairman of the board of Anglec today is Mr. David Carty. The Chairman of the board of Anglec when we were in office was also David Carty, and he held a town hall style meeting along with the CEO at the time, Mr. Sutcliff Hodge, and told the people of Anguilla that for Anglec to move forward with a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank, it must have the government's blessing. Because what they are not telling you is that the position then and now are different in that the government has reached a place based on the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility Act that they don't have to go to London like a little dog anymore.

Hopefully this United Front Administration will be the administration that takes us into political independence. I'll support that too. I don't care who takes us into independence as long as we get there. That is the difference. It was the same Single Island-Wide Member, Mr. Jose Vanterpool, who stood up in this House in November 2025 and said by December 2025 the Caracus Building would be completed and operational for January 1st 2026. He said it was important for that building to be bought to facilitate renewable energy integration. When I drive by the Caracas Building, when I go to buy my aronel water—the best water on the planet, shameless plug—when I look, I see a dugout shell, Madam Speaker.

We are in April of 2026. Like I said, we are not here to oppose this bill. We are here to support this bill, but our position remains that the government of Anguilla can and should do more. When the vote comes to the House, you will hear a number of ayes.

You won't hear any nays, Madam Speaker, because we all support this bill, and we believe it should be permanent. To say we don't know what's going to happen next week, when we have a precedent that is predictable, and to say that what the Premier of Anguilla says in a press conference holds weight—when Trump says what he says on a Friday, the markets react. When he says what he says, the market reacts. The markets react when he's standing in front of the door of Airforce One and says something like, "I'm going to take Cuba, we're negotiating with the new head of Iran and we're going to have a ceasefire deal." The markets react, and then Iran comes out with some Lego cartoons and says, "We don't know who Trump is talking about," and the market reacts again.

The markets react based on what the leader of the country says, whether it's Trump or the Honourable Premier of Anguilla, Madam Speaker, because it was the Honourable Chief Minister in 2006, Mr. Osbourne Burlington Fleming, who said to the people of Anguilla, "Go to the banks and borrow and build, we will facilitate those loans." The people of Anguilla from Island Harbour to West End, from Shoal Bay to the Forest, went to the banks and borrowed and built.

One of the directors of the National Bank of Anguilla was the now Honourable Cora Richardson-Hodge, but I digress. They went to the banks and borrowed and built, and in 2007, the National Bank of Anguilla boasted that they had a billion dollars in assets. We are building a west branch. I said on a radio show when that west branch started, "They're building the bank for me," because I live right next to the bank and National Bank of Anguilla is my bank.

I loved that bank. I could call up the bank on a Monday and have a loan by Thursday. It was a good time to be banking in Anguilla back in those days. By 2009, the bank had basically collapsed. Osbourne Fleming, Victor Banks, and Evans Mc'Neil Rogers were in a press conference, and the United Front administration said to England, "Come for your country, come for your country," since you weren't allowing us to borrow to get out of the situation. When we went down to the National Bank of Anguilla building, we went upstairs—it was an empty shell, not even the walls inside were plastered. Everything looked pretty from the outside; inside was empty. In 2009, they created a company called ASSICO Anguilla Social Security Company Limited, Madam Speaker, and through that vehicle, they took $20 million dollars to purchase a Cinnamon Reef property that had a valuation in the good times of 2.71, and that was to provide liquidity for the National Bank of Anguilla.

Things were falling apart quickly, and in June of 2009, the

Anguilla United Front through Executive Council approved the Anguilla Fiscal Recovery Plan 2009 to 2011, and in that they spoke about payroll tax, goods and services tax, accommodation tax increases, property tax increases, resort, residential, assets, and more. But Osbourne Fleming said, the Anguilla United Front said, we will not be bringing any budget to the House. Whoever comes in office in 2010 will have to bring their budget. Unprecedented.

I believe that in 2029, the Anguilla United Front will bring a budget to the House regardless of what the political consequences are in 2030. I believe they will because it was the only time that that happened, Madam Speaker, and guess why it happened? Because the British government and the FCDO, the Foreign and Colonial Office, said to the government of Anguilla in writing in October 2009, you don't have to bring a budget, you don't have to put these taxes in place. I'm paraphrasing here. You can wait until after the elections to do these things to the people, and they agreed. But in January of 2010, another letter was sent, addressed to the Minister of Finance, Victor Banks, in the United Front administration, along the same lines and also speaking of the fishing arrangements with St. Martin that the member for West End, Mr. Cardigan Connor, said he would work out.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member, do you have any contribution in respect to the bill that is on the floor? If you do, I'd like you to get to those please. Thank you.

DEBATE ON CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY BILL 2026

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Honourable Member, do you have any contribution in respect to the bill that is on the floor? If you do, I'd like you to get to those please. Thank you.

Hon.Mr. Haydn Hughes:

Madam Speaker, what I'm saying is contributions because you said and I quote… Madam Speaker, I'm saying all that to get my point in all of this. Madam Speaker, all of my contributions is relating to the bill. And I know you know what you said when I spoke about what the Member for Valley North said. You said…. Madam Speaker, I am speaking to the bill and we did not have any time limits that was established at the beginning of this debate.

If we had time limits, then we'd be guided by those parameters. Madam Speaker, I'm speaking to the bill. Madam Speaker, I continue to present my presentation on this bill as planned. Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter how much time I need. No, it does not. Because we do not have any time limits set. Show me the rule that stipulates that you can stop my debate without time limits that has been established by the house Madam Speaker, I'll wait.

I hope the people of Anguilla is watching. They say to me the same things that they're seeing today. Madam Speaker, you did not establish time limits and so I can speak to this bill and one of the members, I believe it was the member for Valley North, said that at some point in time we'll have some sort of historical context of how we got here and I'm saying…

Madam Speaker that's not… Madam Speaker, that is illegal.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

No, no. If you have any contributions in respect to the bill, now would be a good time to get to them. You've had more than 45 minutes, and I know what I said. But you can get to your contributions now. Thank you. I Know, 45 minutes is way more than flexible to get to your point. You've made no contributions on the bill. The Member for Valley North was responding to your Honourable leader who said that the government should go far enough and then made submissions on GST and that member responded to those.

You don't need to eat into your time to remind me I have a very good memory. Could you please move on to your contributions on the bill, please? Thank You. The Lesson I've learned is that in the future, if there is anything that's consensual, there still will be time limits because I thought members would be more than reasonable. I have not been unreasonable to you. 45 minutes on something you're consenting to and not speaking to is far more than reasonable.

But I will take your point, and I will reinstitute time limits even for agreed motions, because it's agreed. How much time do you need to complete your presentation? It actually does matter. Okay. You're waiting for me to respond to you? Because I'm not going to respond to you.

How much time do you need to wrap up your submission is the question I've asked and if you don't need any more time, I can move on. How much time do you need to wrap up your submission? Honourable Member. Okay, that concludes your presentation. I think your being factious Member, I'm only asking how much time because its 6:00 and there are other members that have to speak.

I've given you 45 minutes on an uncontested bill. I'm only asking you a straightforward question. How much more time do you need? You said 2 hours. I can't allow you to have 2 hours. So, you're either being factious or you need 2 hours. How much time do you need? You're not going to be allowed a hour. You're allowed 10 more minutes to wrap up and if that's not enough you can wrap up right now. Are there any other contributions to the motion? I recognize the Honourable Single Island-Wide Member Hodge. Please Proceed with your contribution.

Hon.Kyle Hodge:

Good afternoon Madam Speaker, and I want to thank you for this opportunity to be in this House this late afternoon to be able to give my contribution to what this side of the House has been doing for the people of Anguilla over the past five to six weeks.

As we look at the world today, we recognise that things have shifted and changed for the worst. As any responsible government would do, we pay attention to what's happening in the news, in the region, outside of the region and within Anguilla. Before I begin, I want to place on record thanks to the various ministries, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development, permanent secretaries and all the technical folks who laboured to ensure that we had executive council approval.

I thank the AG and her team for putting together this bill that suspends and helps us in achieving the overall goal, and thank you Madam Speaker for coming back to this House sooner than expected. I thank the cabinet, the legislative branch, the Premier, the people of Anguilla, the business community, and groups who have Anguilla at heart. The effort to get to this point was phenomenal. A few weeks ago, after realising what's happening globally, we decided to approach this with three measures and implemented the first two. The first was the removal of all duties on the importation of fuel.

As it stands today, the price at the pump does not reflect any Government taxes. Over the years government received up to $4.00EC in taxes on fuel importation, more recently cut to $2.00EC. Government is not collecting taxes on fuel at the port and this measure is in place for at least three months as we continue to monitor and assess. The three month period is for us to gather data. We recognise the importance of bringing these measures to the House and ensuring we respond quickly to cushion the impact on the public. Without proper notice, electricity, fuel, shipping, and food prices would all go up at once.

Recognising this, we acted and came back to the House sooner than planned. The other measure implemented is controlling the fuel surcharge at Anglec. Anglec runs on diesel and the cost per barrel is about $110.00 or more. Anglec posted that government support will apply to amounts exceeding 65 cents per kilowatt hour for the accommodation sector, and for domestic accounts, support applies to any increase above 42 cents per kilowatt. Domestic accounts include households, local businesses, restaurants, supermarkets, hardware stores, barbershops, salons—any business not categorised as accommodation. The measures we are taking today apply across the board. Businesses didn't benefit from the $500 EC credit from Anglec during the last administration, but today's support goes across the board.

The bill before us, the Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026, removes the duty from being charged on freight and insurance cost. Now, importers pay duties only on the cost of goods. Since the announcement, I have seen people excited, importers sending messages to suppliers to send goods to Anguilla. There is optimism even during this chaotic period.

This may be the breakthrough that businesses need. Over the next three months, we will analyse this period as importers look to increase volume. My hope is that increased volume leads to better rates. We hope this period allows for stockpiling, as we don't know when goods will run out or which countries will stop exports.

We have come to this House with this measure in addition to the other two already implemented. We ask that as a people we price goods responsibly and support our businesses. Let us see how our local dollar can stimulate and keep the economy moving forward.

CUSTOMS TEMPORARY MODIFICATION OF VALUATION OF IMPORT DUTY ACT, 2026 - SECOND READING DEBATE

Hon.Kyle Hodge:

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I want to thank you for this opportunity to contribute to what this side of the House has been doing for the people of Anguilla over the past five to six weeks. As we look at the world today, we recognise that things have shifted and changed for the worse. As any responsible government would do, we pay attention to what's happening on the news, in the region, outside the region, and within Anguilla. Before I begin, I want to place on record my thanks to the various ministries—the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development, permanent secretaries, and all the technical folks who worked tirelessly to ensure we had Executive Council approval.

I thank the Attorney General and her team for putting together this bill that helps us achieve our overall goal, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for returning to this House sooner than expected. Thanks also to the Cabinet, the legislative branch, the Premier, and the people of Anguilla, including the business community and groups who have Anguilla at heart. The effort to get to this point today was phenomenal, and we must give credit where it is due. A few weeks ago, recognising the global environment and geopolitics, we decided to approach this with three measures and have already implemented the first two. The first is the removal of all duties on the importation of fuel.

As it stands, the price at the pump today does not reflect any government taxes. Previously, government collected up to $4.00 EC in taxes on fuel importation, more recently cut to $2.00 EC. Now, government is not collecting taxes on fuel at the port. This measure is in place for at least three months as we monitor and assess the situation and gather data. We recognise the importance of responding quickly to cushion the impact on the public, as costs for electricity, fuel, shipping, and food would otherwise rise rapidly. The second measure is controlling the fuel surcharge at Anglec.

Anglec runs on diesel, and the cost per barrel of oil is about $110.00 or more. According to Anglec, support will apply to the accommodation sector for amounts exceeding 65 cents per kilowatt hour, and for domestic accounts—defined as all non-accommodation accounts—support applies to any increase above 42 cents per kilowatt hour. This includes households,

local businesses, restaurants, supermarkets, hardware stores, barber shops, and salons.

This measure is across the board, unlike the previous $500 credit which went only to households. Today, businesses also benefit. There has been criticism that we are not going far enough, but the order paper clearly states what we are doing. The Bill for Customs Temporary Modification of Valuation of Import Duty Act, 2026, removes the duty from being charged on freight and insurance costs.

Importers will now pay duties only on the cost of goods, not on added freight and insurance. Since this announcement, importers are excited and contacting suppliers to send goods to Anguilla. This measure could be the breakthrough businesses need, and over the next three months, we will analyse its impact. We hope increased volume will lead to better rates and stockpiling, given global uncertainties.

We ask that businesses price goods responsibly and that people support local businesses. It is my hope that the business community takes advantage of this period, buys more, gives better deals, and helps stimulate the local economy.

Hon.Cardigan Connor:

Madam Speaker, I believe that in every situation there is an opportunity. For years, Anguillians have liked to think we work together, but often very independently. Many merchants would import containers that were half full, not working together. We often marvel at how the Chinese work together, but maybe this is an opportunity for us as a people or businesses to do the same. I must say,

Madam Speaker, that being outside Anguilla does not make you any less Anguillian. Whether you are in Miami or London, you are still Anguillian. For those who criticise the office in England, it is an investment in our people. Some people cannot be convinced against their will, and if their objective is to muddy the waters, then we are doing well as a government.

Hon.Cardigan Connor:

Madam Speaker, my team has gone out of their way—not just the elected Members, but all who have Anguilla's interest at heart. Over the last week especially, a lot of work has gone into making sure this Bill comes to the House with haste because we are being proactive, not reactive, to what is likely to happen soon. I do not intend to go on much longer. Much has been said, but I am here to show support to the Premier, our team, the Attorney General's Office, the Deputy Governor, the Permanent Secretaries, and all who contributed to ensuring the people of Anguilla see that we are not taking away from them to give back crumbs. That may have been the case with the GST, but now we are giving support ahead of time because we know some things are beyond our control.

What we can control, we will ensure is in the best interest of our people. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

PROCEDURAL RULING ON STANDING ORDERS AND RELEVANCE IN DEBATE

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

I read that because it is our Standing Orders that this House has adopted. The Honourable Member for Road South questioned whether the Speaker was permitted to limit or curtail some of his submissions. I want to read that rule into the record. Erskine May paragraph 2.42 states that if any Member strays from the question under discussion, the Speaker will remind that Member to speak to the Question. If a Member persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition, Standing Order 2.42 empowers the Speaker, after calling attention to the Member's conduct, to direct them to discontinue their speech.

Similarly, Standing Order number 42A allows the occupant of the chair to direct a Member who breaches the rules to resume their seat. If a Member refuses to obey, the Speaker may direct them to withdraw from the House for the remainder of the Sitting or name them for disregarding the authority of the chair. I place on record that the Honourable Member for Road South commenced his presentation at 5:03 pm and at about 5:37 I inquired if that Member intended to speak to the substance of the bill. The Member indicated there were no time limits and the Speaker did not have authority to curtail his presentation.

The Speaker then indicated that there was authority to curtail the presentation as it relates to relevance and other Standing Orders.

OTHER ORDERS OF THE DAY

Clerk:

Private Members Bills. None. Private Bills. None. Other orders of the day.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

Are there any other orders of the day? Hearing none, may I invite the mover to move for adjournment of this House.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Hon Cora Richardson-Hodge:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that this honourable House be adjourned until the 14th of April at 11am.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

10:00am? 11? Okay, it has a seconder?

Hon.Cardigan Connor:

I rise to second Madam Speaker.

Hon. Speaker Tara Cater:

It has been moved and seconded that this honourable House stand adjourned until April 14th at 11am. Those in favour say I. Those opposed say no. The I's have it. This House stands adjourned. Thank you Members.