

50th Anniversary Special Sitting of Parliament

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

8 OCTOBER 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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PRAYER

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good morning, Honourable Members. I now call this first sitting of the 4th meeting of the 2nd session of the 13th Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to be held on Thursday, 8 October 2026, at the Honorable N.J.S. Francis Building, Pond Street, Grand Turk, to order. Honourable Members, I now call on our Chaplain, Bishop Coleta Williams III, to pray for this assembly.

PRAYER

Chaplain:

1 Kings chapter 3 and verse 9. So give your servants a discerning heart To govern your people with distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of ours? This applies to the 50th Golden Jubilee anniversary rededication, renaming of a parliament. This verse serves as a powerful foundational tax Offering a timeless blueprint for governance, leadership transition, institutional renewal. Here is how the theme of 1 Kings 3:9 directly intercepts the milestone of a parliamentary rededication. A blueprint of institutional renewal.

Rededication. The hearing heart. In the original Hebrew, the phrase translated as discerning heart or understanding mind literally means a hearing heart, a heart that listens. A rededication ceremony is not just about celebration and celebrating a physical building It is a spiritual and civic promise to listen both to divine principles of justice and to the need of the citizens.

Distinguishing right from wrong, Parliament is the central factory of law. By invoking these verses, the institution centers its focus Away from political expediency and back onto its core moral stand, enacting legislation that clearly distinguishes between just, unjust, and right and wrong. Honoring legacy while facing the future. The 50th anniversary, the weight of succession, Contextually, Solomon prays that this prayer right after taking over the throne from his legendary father, King David.

He feels small, calling himself only a little child in the verse preceding it. Bridging the generations at a 50th anniversary, a parliament stands on the shoulder of its founders. It honors 5 decades of legislative legacy, which acknowledging that a new generation of leaders must now step up. The verse serves as an antidote to political pride, reminding current parliamentarians that despite 50 years of institutional history They still require deep humility, wisdom to guide the country into the next half century.

The responsibility of governing a great people, humility in the face of scale. Solomon asks, for who is able to govern this great people of ours? He acknowledged that human intellect alone is insufficient to manage the complexities of a diverse country. A stewardship reminded in a modern, secular, pluralistic, democratic context, this reminds parliamentarians that the power they hold is a rented trust. The people they govern are great in their values.

Diversity and democracy demanding a caliber of leadership that puts the collective well-being above personal and partisan gain, putting wisdom over wealth and power, the true measure of success. When God offered Solomon everything he wanted, he didn't ask for wealth. He didn't ask for fame, a long life, victory over his political enemies. He asked for the capacity to serve justly.

Rededication of purpose for Parliament celebrating 50 years, the verse challenged the government to measure its success not merely by economic growth or political dominance, But by its judicial integrity, the fairness of its laws, and its protection of the vulnerable. Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, ruler of the nations, source of all truth, wisdom, we gather today with hearts full of gratitude As we mark 50 years of service within this Parliament, your word reminds us in Psalms 90:12, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Lord, as we look back over 5 decades of governance, we thank you for your enduring faithfulness, for sustaining this institution through every season of change.

For guiding our leaders through the complexities of history. We ask that you pour out your blessing upon our Honourable Speaker, our Premier, our Leader of the Opposition, and every member of this Parliament, and our special invited guests gathered here. Grant them the spirit of Solomon, who prayed in 1 Kings 3:9, for an understanding heart to govern our people and to distinguish between right and wrong. May every debate held within these halls be filled with integrity.

May every law passed reflect your ultimate justice and righteousness. Lord, keep these leaders close to the heart of the people they serve. Remind them of the Micah 6:8 mandate to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. Protect this Assembly from division. Unite them in the shared purpose to build a country where peace, prosperity, and human dignity flourish for generations to come. As we dedicate the future of this Parliament into your hands, We pray that your presence will continue to anchor this House for the next 50 years and beyond with progress, justice, democratic excellence. As we look forward to the next 50 years, let this Golden Jubilee be more than a look back at the past. Let it be a solemn rededication to to the core principle of democracy, accountability, transparency, and a relentless commitment to the public good.

May those who walk these halls in decades to come always be guided by courage, integrity, and unwavering devotion to people and country. Bless this Parliament. Bless our beloved country. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Pray be seated. Honourable Members, before we begin, I would like to ask the members and also the strangers in the gallery to please recheck their telephones to make certain that it is on vibrate or silent. Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Premier.

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

MESSAGE FROM HIS MAJESTY THE KING DELIVERED BY HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and good morning to the distinguished members of the Parliament, good morning to distinguished invitees from overseas and public servants and strangers in the gallery, good morning. Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament be suspended and that it invites Her Excellency The Governor to appear and deliver A message from His Majesty King Charles III.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Do I have a second?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Good morning everyone. Mr. Speaker, I rise to second this motion that this Honourable House be suspended and that it invites Her Excellency the Governor to appear and deliver a message from His Majesty King Charles III.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honorable Premier and Honorable Leader of the Opposition. Honorable Members, motion moved by the Honorable Premier and seconded by the Honorable Leader of the Opposition, be it resolved that this Honorable Parliament be suspended and that it invites Her Excellency the Governor to appear and deliver a message from His Majesty the King. All in favor say aye. All to the contrary, no.

The ayes have it. Honourable members, I will now suspend this honourable Parliament so that I could meet the Honourable Governor, Her Excellency the Governor, to deliver the message from His Majesty the King. This honourable Parliament is hereby suspended.

Her Excellency The Governor:

Pray be seated. Hon. Speaker and visiting speakers, Speaker Holness, Speaker Carty, and Deputy Speaker Cummings, Honourable Chief Justice, Honourable Premier and Members of Cabinet, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Members of Parliament, former Premiers, Chief Ministers and Members of the House, former Chief Secretaries and Deputy Governors, distinguished members of the judiciary, Bishop Lashboyd and members of the clergy, Permanent Secretaries, the Commissioner of Police, the Commanding Officer, and all members of the public service. Members of the public and all gathered here and online, it is an honour to join Parliament as you celebrate 50 years of ministerial governance. As we mark this significant milestone, I join with communities all across our islands in celebrating 50 years of progress and in paying tribute to the generations who in so many different ways and across every part of our society have contributed their vision, service, enterprise, and dedication to shaping the Turks and Caicos Islands that we know today.

It is now my great privilege to deliver a message from His Majesty the King Charles III. Mr. Speaker, as the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands gather to mark the 50th anniversary of ministerial government, I wanted to send my greetings and congratulations on this most significant occasion. This golden anniversary offers an opportunity to reflect upon the inheritance entrusted from one generation to the next. Over the past 50 years, the Turks and Caicos Islands have undergone profound transformation.

Through the dedication of many leaders, public servants, community figures, entrepreneurs, people of faith, and citizens from every walk of life, institutions have developed, opportunities have expanded, and a democratic tradition has taken root. Such milestones invite us not only to reflect upon

what has been achieved, but also to recognize the responsibilities that accompany this progress. The true measure of stewardship lies not merely in what we receive, but in what we preserve, strengthen, and pass on to those who follow. This enduring principle is reflected in the extraordinary natural environment with which these islands have been blessed.

The beaches, reefs, wetlands, and marine ecosystems of the Turks and Caicos Islands are among the greatest national treasures of our world. Their beauty inspires admiration but also brings with it a duty of care. As communities across the globe confront the challenges of environmental degradation and a changing climate, the protection of these precious landscapes and seascapes is not simply an environmental obligation but a moral one. I have been encouraged greatly by the commitment shown across the Turks and Caicos Islands to safeguarding this unique natural inheritance of which the whole community can rightly be proud.

Yet stewardship extends beyond the natural world. It embraces our responsibility to strengthen public institutions, uphold democratic values, and build a society in which every person has the opportunity to contribute and flourish. It calls for leadership characterized by integrity, service, and a commitment to the common good. Above all, it asks each of us to consider how we might contribute to the continued flourishing of these islands.

My wife and I extend our heartfelt good wishes to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. May these celebrations inspire a renewed sense of unity, purpose, and stewardship. And may God continue to bless these islands and all who call them home. His Majesty King Charles III.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AND NATIONAL SONG

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Our members and strangers in the gallery, please rise for the singing of the national anthem. And the national song by Ms. Barbra LeeJohnson.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

You may be seated. Hon. Premier.

MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament record their thanks to the message delivered today to the Parliament by Her Excellency The Governor.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to second the motion that this Honourable House records the thanks for the message delivered today to Parliament by Her Excellency The Governor. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members motion moved by the Honorable Premier and seconded by the Honorable Leader of the Opposition, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament record their thanks to the message delivered today to the Parliament by Her Excellency The Governor. All in favor say aye. All to the contrary, no. Aye.

The ayes have it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Hon. Premier, I will call on you again.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament invites the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons to take the Chair and make an address on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, it is again with great pleasure that I second the motion that this Honourable House invites the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons to take the chair and make an address on this occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Hon. Premier and Hon. Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament invites the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom of the House of Commons to make an address on the

occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos. All in favor say aye.

All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honorable Deputy Speaker.

Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons:

Accepting the protocol for to assist Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you all to celebrate this important milestone in the history of the Turks and Caicos Islands— 50 years of ministerial government and democratic progress here at the Turks and Caicos Islands Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record my thanks to you and your team and your colleagues for the very warm welcome that I have received here in the beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands.

Speaker Hoyle is currently attending the Interparliamentary Union's General Assembly in Arusha, Tanzania, and so asked me to join you here today— a real honour and a privilege for me— to share a message of congratulations from the House of Commons as you mark 50 years of ministerial government and as you embark on the next chapter of your democracy here in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Speaker Hoyle sends to you all, members and your constituents, his well wishes today. I look forward to sharing with him my experience of my time here on my return to Westminster. As you are all I am sure very well aware, Speaker Hoyle is committed to supporting the Overseas Territories and is a champion for them in the House of Commons. Since 2021, the flags of the Overseas Territories have flown on their national days at the Palace of Westminster, an important visual representation of this commitment.

And this year, the flag flew on the 31st of August To observe the newly established Constitution Day, marking 50 years since your first elected government in 1976. During his tenure, Speaker Hoyle has been particularly pleased to be able to welcome people from the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to London, to Westminster, and indeed to the House of Commons Chamber itself. At the annual sitting of the UK Youth Parliament sitting, we have heard inspiring and thought-provoking speeches from Brianna Burton, Demari Fulford, and Chelsea Been, all who spoke so eloquently in the House on themes such as Girlguiding, access to education, and the importance of supporting young people with special educational needs such as dyslexia.

It was extremely powerful witnessing these young people make history by sharing their experiences On the famous green benches of the House of Commons, a space reserved normally only for our elected representatives. Premier, I know that some of your colleagues across the Overseas Territories probably wish that they'd had that opportunity as young people. I certainly do. I'm also so pleased and feel extremely privileged to have been given the opportunity to address you all here in In your chamber, in your Parliament building, which I must note has also had its challenges. Following the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, I know that it was a mammoth task to restore the building, and I look forward to seeing more of its redevelopment here today. Because our parliamentary buildings are important, but Parliaments, as we know, are more than bricks and mortar. The buildings themselves mean a great deal to us as representatives and to our constituents who can exercise their right to come and watch us working and know that their concerns are being represented and their voices heard in these chambers. Over the last 50 years, these islands have seen many challenges, from hurricanes to economic uncertainty, but what is clear to me is the resilience with which leaders then and now and the people of these islands have faced these challenges with courage, determination, and resolve.

These times have laid the foundations for today and will form the building blocks for the next chapter in your history. The 50th anniversary of ministerial government is an important moment for us all to stop, pause, and reflect on your achievements and to consider what the next 50 years should look like to best serve all those who call these islands their home. From the futures of the young people of your islands, building infrastructure fit for the demands of the 21st century, to the protection of the natural environment. Your marine protected areas encompass one of the world's finest barrier reefs, and the work you are doing will preserve these areas for the future.

Now, some of us here today may have vivid memories of 1976. For everyone else, let me set the scene. The world looked very different. 1976 was the year that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak founded Apple. International communication was measured in days, not seconds, and many of the technologies we would not be able to live without today simply did not exist. And these islands also look very different.

Challenging infrastructure. The fishing industry was the primary local industry, and your electorate during these elections— during the elections which ushered in the start of ministerial government was 2,995 people. Thank you. Well, a lot has changed in that time. We all now have phones in our pockets, no longer computers the size of this chamber. But what does 50 years of change look like here on the Turks and Caicos Islands? Well, there are now over 10,000 people on the electoral register, almost 400,000 people stayover visitors from January to June 2026, an increase on 2021. Thank you. There have been 13 Speakers of Parliament, 11 Chief Ministers and Premiers, and a number of other elected representatives, and of course the countless numbers of people who have served in the civil service, the people who work so hard to ensure that system— the systems work and that policies are implemented.

All of these people have contributed to the success of the last 50 years and are part of this important chapter in the history of the Turks and Caicos Islands. And I am sure that those who were here in 1976 laying these important foundations must feel a huge sense of pride for all that has been achieved since then, and it is right that we pay tribute to them today. The introduction of ministerial government represented an important democratic step in the constitutional development of

the Turks and Caicos Islands. Although a number of things have changed, the overarching principle of ministerial government persists.

Public power carries public responsibility, and accountability is key to the functioning of our democracies. 2026 has its own challenges. We live in tumultuous times with conflicts around the world which impact on us all, no matter where in the world we live. Indeed, so much has changed, but what remains is the need for elected representatives to listen to their constituents, represent their views, and make important decisions in our parliaments.

And now more than ever, it is necessary that we have a global outlook that we work together through these challenges. Speaker Hoyle has championed this outlook with the establishment of the Commons and Overseas Territories Speakers Conference, first meeting in person in 2022, and which Speaker Burton, you ably hosted in 2024 here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The communiqué from that conference states the following: We reaffirmed the central Role played by legislatures in democratic life, our commitment to the principles of democracy in our legislatures, the sacredness of democracy, and the need for partnership to sustain it. As our legislatures bring together all components of society, they are the cornerstones of democratic governance.

They represent the wills and the expressions of the people through scrutiny and the democratic process. Now, I refer to this statement from the communiqué as it reminds us that our legislatures are critical, particularly when we think too of ministerial government. Ministers must allow their colleagues the opportunity to scrutinise their work, ask questions in the best interest of the constituents, and debate and consider legislation and its implementation. Whilst marking this milestone of 50 years of ministerial government, we must also remember that the foundation is the legislature, and our legislatures must be robust to best serve the interests of our citizens.

I wanted to touch on the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK which many of you will know works closely with the Overseas Territories across a number of different strands of work, all of which I know contribute to fostering strong foundations here in Parliament. One initiative that deserves special recognition is a recently established Overseas Territories Women's Group comprising of elected and lay members from parliaments across the Territories. I'm particularly pleased that the group is chaired and led by one of your own members, Hon. Akiera Missick, with the support of Hon. Joëlle Lassidius of the Gibraltar Parliament. Although only 6 months old, this group has already played host to women parliamentarians from across the Overseas Territories on 5 occasions, and they can— they have identified shared areas of interest and where they can support and learn from one another.

These networks are vital to the strength and resilience of our parliamentary institutions. They help ensure that we continue to listen to and respond to the issues affecting diverse groups within our constituencies and communities, and I wish the group every success in its endeavours and look forward to engaging with its members. Members. Indeed, I should also mention election observation missions.

Since 2012, you have welcomed 3 missions, and a number of your members have also taken part in them. Most recently, Hon. Willin A. Belliard and Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly participated in an election observation mission in the Isle of Man last month. Election observation demonstrates the Commonwealth's commitment to promoting democratic elections as part of its broader support for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to review and implement recommendations arising from these processes, and it should remain our collective ambition to improve where improvements are needed while maintaining and strengthening what is working well. In the context of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government, that is even more pertinent. As we have seen, nothing stands still, and so as parliamentarians, we and our institutions must strive to reflect the world we live in.

All of these initiatives of learning from each other, sharing our experiences, and working together to strengthen our institutions enrich our democracy and help us better serve the people who place their trust in us. The UK Parliament remains a committed partner to the Turks and Caicos Islands, and I look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years ahead as we build stronger, more resilient, and more effective democratic institutions together. Her Excellency said exactly one month ago today during the Speech from the Throne. What this generation received must be protected, strengthened, and passed on to the next stronger and more resilient.

That mission extends far beyond the passage of legislation. It is a solemn standard of stewardship, a call to responsible leadership, and a commitment to leave an enduring legacy for generations to come. This is indeed a strong call to action, and I look forward to witnessing the next chapter in the years to come in these beautiful islands. And it will, of course, be written not only by you all in this room today, but by those in their classrooms across the islands today.

The onus is on us all to share with them the value of public service to your community and the importance of our democratic institutions in changing our futures. And from what I've seen in this chamber today and also at the UK Youth Parliament, I am certain that the future of the Turks and Caicos Islands is indeed in safe hands. So thank you for your incredibly warm welcome, Mr. Speaker and your colleagues, and to your beautiful islands.

I look forward to the rest of today's celebrations. Thank you.

MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, I want to thank the Honourable Deputy

Speaker of the House of Commons for bringing that very inspiring address to us this morning, and I'll now like to call on the Honourable Premier to acknowledge the address officially. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you. Thank you, Hon. Speaker, and thank you for honouring us with your presence. And so I now rise, Mr. Speaker, to express thanks for the address delivered to Parliament by the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, being most appreciative, I once again rise to second the motion that this Honourable Parliament records its thanks for the address delivered today to Parliament by the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons. Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

UNVEILING OF PORTRAITS OF FORMER SPEAKERS AND PREMIERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier and Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Members, Motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament records its thanks for the address delivered today to the Parliament by the Deputy Speaker of the United Kingdom of the House of Commons. All in favour say aye.

All to the contrary, no. Aye. The ayes have it. Honourable Members, several years ago, long before my time, Mr. Neville Boulton— I believe most of us know Mr. Neville Boulton— commissioned the portraits that we have in Parliament today, and he gave it as a gift to the Parliament of the former Chief Ministers and Premiers and the former Speakers up to that time.

However, those paintings stopped as you could see, the Hon. Michael Misick as Premier and the Hon. Oneil de Lancie as Speaker. And so when I became Speaker, I felt that it was important for us to continue with those portraits. And as a part of the 50th anniversary, we went through a tendering process And the tendering board selected Ambassador Jamal Rule to continue painting the premiers and also the speakers since that time. So I'm here today to officially have the unveiling of those portraits.

Before we do, I would like to call on The Honourable Premier to move the motion and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to second the motion for the unveiling. Honourable Premier. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I like the cooperation between the Leader of the Opposition and myself today. I hope keep it going. Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament unveils the portraits of former Speakers and Premiers of the Turks and Caicos Islands on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

So moved. Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. And Mr. Speaker, being a humble servant of the people, I am grateful for this opportunity to be in the position to second the motion that this Honourable House unveils the portions— the page— the portraits— the paintings for the speakers. You're making me laugh. Speakers and the former premiers f these Turks and Caicos Islands on this occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament unveils the portraits of former Speakers and Premiers of these Turks and Caicos Islands on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. Aye.

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, I will now call on the former speakers, and I will call them based on the dates they served. The first former Premier I would like to call on is the Honourable Galmo Williams. Honourable Williams. And if you want to take your bride with you, you may. Honorable, Honorable Williams served as Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands from March 2009 to August 2009. Can you help? Honorable Williams, thank you for your service.

The next former premier is the Honorable Dr. Rufus Ewing. Hon. Ewing served from November of 2012 to December of 2016. Thank you. Honorable Ewing, Honorable Ewing, thank you for your service. Our next Premier to serve is also our first female Premier, and I would like, I would like to call on the Honourable Sharlene Cartwright Robinson, who served from December 2016 to February 2021.

Hon. Honorable Cartwright Robinson, thank you very much for your service. Honorable members, in addition to the premiers, we also have former speakers that we want to honor here today with the unveiling of their portraits. And so I would like to first call online Hon. Glennevans C.

Clarke, who served from May 2003 to January 2007. Hon.

Clarke. Honorable Clerk, thank you very much for your service. The next speaker is the Honourable Clayton Green. And Honourable Green served from February of 2007 to August of 2009. Honorable Green, thank you for your service. Honorable members, the next speaker in line is the Honourable Robert S. Hall.

Who was Speaker from November of 2012 to December of 2016? Hon. Honorable Hall, thank you very much for your service. Our next speaker, our next speaker is the Honorable Dwayne T. Taylor, and Honorable Taylor served from December 2016 to December 2020. Honorable members, I want to again say thank you to the former honorable premiers and also honorable speakers for, for their service to the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands over the years.

I also, I also want to thank the artists who I think did an amazing job. And so I'll ask Ambassador Jamal Roll to please stand. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, thank you very much. Honorable Members, 22 years ago when this building first opened, we had a lady come in and sing a song for us to bless the building at that time. It was 2004.

So for this 50th anniversary of the Ministerial government and constitutional advancement. We saw it fitting to bring her back 22 years later to sing the same song she sang then. And so I'd like to now call on Ms. Barbara Lee Johnson to sing the song God Bless This House.

Thank you. Thank you very much, Ms. Barbara Lee Johnson, for bringing back that rendition of God Bless This House. Honourable Members, we will now have the pinning of former Honourable Members of this Parliament, and I would like to again call on the Honourable Premier.

PINNING OF FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament invites the former Hon. Members of the Parliament present in the Chamber to take their places in the Well of the House, to be pinned in commemoration of their service on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker --

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I move to second the motion, I just want to tell the members here how proud I am of each and every one of you. Without each and every one of you, none of us would be able to be here today. You laid the foundation for us, and we are duty thankful for each and every one of you.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to second that motion.

LAUNCH OF PARLIAMENT DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND EPARLIAMENT

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament invites the former Honourable Members of the Parliament present in the Chamber to take their places in the Well of the House to be pinned in commemoration of their service on the occasion of the 30th— the 50th, sorry, Anniversary of Ministerial Government in the Turks and Caicos Islands. All in favor say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Aye. The ayes have it. Honourable members, can you please, please— okay. Okay, I want to thank all of the former and current members for their Service to the Parliament and also to the Turks and Caicos Islands. Thank you. Okay, honorable members, it's almost over. What we have— pardon? Okay, honorable members, we are almost finished, but we have a few more important things to do before we end this sitting of Parliament. And I would like to now announce the launch of the new Parliament webpage, Hansard, the Parliament YouTube channel, and the commencement of eParliament at the commemorative sitting of this session.

One moment. Before we move on, we just remember we have one more person that we have to honor here today because he's been with us through thick and thin. One moment. In the continuing modernization of Parliament and in our commitment to openness, accountability, and public engagement, as a key deliverable of my second-term agenda as Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to formally introduce the new Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands website, our new Hansard platform, our new Parliament YouTube channel, And the commencement of eParliament.

These initiatives form part of the Parliament's eGovernment Platform project, which was undertaken through a collaboration between the Parliament, the Ministry of Innovation, Technology and Energy, DICE, Evolute, Digital Elements, the Clerk to the Parliament and her dedicated parliamentary staff. Why this matters. Parliament belongs to the people. Our responsibility extends beyond debating legislation and scrutinizing government business.

We must also ensure that citizens can easily access information about the work that takes place within these chambers— this chamber. For many years, parliamentary information was available only through traditional channels. However, technology now gives us the opportunity to bring Parliament closer to the people than ever before. Today's

launch represents another step in strengthening democracy through greater transparency, accessibility, and public participation. The new digital platforms will make it easier for citizens, students, researchers, journalists, public officers, and members of Parliament to access parliamentary information and records. What is Hansard? Hansard is the official record of proceedings in Parliament. It is the, it is the permanent and authoritative record of what is said during parliamentary sittings, preserving debates, statements, questions, motions, and other proceedings for future reference.

Traditionally, producing Hansard has been a labour-intensive process requiring the review and transcription of many hours of debate. Today, Parliament is embracing modern technology to improve how these records are created, managed, and accessed. What does that mean for the public? For the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, This project represents a major step forward in transparency and democratic engagement. Citizens will now have easy— easier access to parliamentary proceedings and will be able to better understand the issues being discussed on their behalf.

The Hansard platform will allow users to: 1, search parliamentary debates by topic, keyword, or speaker; 2, locate discussions on issues of national importance; 3, access Hansard records more quickly than ever before. 4, explore historical parliamentary debates and proceedings. 5, gain greater insight into the work of Parliament and elected representatives. This means that Parliament is no longer something that happens behind closed doors and is reported on days or weeks later, or limited to a Facebook Live that disappears after 30 days.

This means that Parliament is not only open to Turks and Caicos Islands— Turks and Caicos Islanders on Grand Turk, but now a hospitality worker on Provo, a parliamentarian on South Caicos, a farmer on North Caicos, retiree on Middle Caicos, and an elderly citizen on Salt Cay can access their Parliament at their fingertips from the comfort of their own homes. Instead, parliamentary information will now be available in a way that is more accessible, searchable, and useful for citizens, students, researchers, journalists, and the wider public. A more informed public creates a stronger democracy, and this platform will help to achieve that goal by bringing Parliament to the people. What does this mean for Members of Parliament? For Honourable Members, the introduction of Hansard and the eParliament initiative bring significant practical benefits.

Members will be able to: 1. Quickly locate from their parliamentary electronic devices and review their contributions during debates; 2. Search previous proceedings and historical records; 3. Reference past discussions when preparing for debates; committee meetings. 4, access parliamentary information more effectively. 5, benefit from improved record management and preservation. The platform will support members in performing their parliamentary duties while ensuring that the work undertaken in this chamber is accurately documented and preserved for future generations. These initiatives also strengthen Parliament as an institution by improving the management of one of our most important democratic assets, the Official Parliamentary Record. Overall engagement, a more connected Parliament. Today is more— today is about more than technology.

It is about creating a Parliament that is more open, accessible, and responsive to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands by embracing technology. It is about creating a Parliament that is more open, accessible, and responsive to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands by embracing technology. Parliament— the Parliament YouTube channel. Citizens will also have a dedicated platform to watch parliamentary proceedings, whether live or on demand.

The official Parliament YouTube channel, which is @TCIParlament, will stream parliamentary sittings, provide access to archived recordings, allow citizens to follow parliamentary business from anywhere in the world, enhance public awareness of the workings of Parliament. The integration of video recordings with Hansard records represent a significant advancement in how parliamentary information is preserved and accessed. The new Parliament website— the new Parliament website which is parliament.gov.tc, serves as the central digital home of Parliament.

It will provide access to information about Members of Parliament, parliamentary schedules and business, committees and reports, legislation, parliamentary documents, news and announcements, Hansard records, and digital resources. The website creates a single destination where citizens can engage with Parliament and access trusted information about the legislative work of the country. The new Parliament website has been designed in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WCAG, standards, ensuring that parliamentary information is accessible to all members of our community, including persons with disability. This means that the website incorporates features that support users who rely on assistive technologies.

Such as screen readers, keyboard navigation, tax resizing, colour contrast adjustments, and other accessibility tools. Accessibility is not merely a technical requirement; it is a reflection of Parliament's commitment to inclusion and equal access to information. For citizens, WCAG compliance means that parliamentary information can be accessed more easily regardless regardless of a person's physical ability, age, or technological limitations. Whether a user has visual, hearing, motor, or cognitive impairments, the website has been designed to reduce barriers and provide a more inclusive online experience.

By making Parliament's digital presence accessible to everyone, we are ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to engage with parliamentary proceedings public information and democratic processes on equal terms. E-Parliament enables standing orders. To complement these advancements, the Standing Orders Committee of Parliament proposed, and the Parliament approved, amendments to the Standing Orders on 24 September 2026 by allowing the recognition of electronic communications as an integral component of modern parliamentary administration. These advancements allow our Parliament to circulate, serve, and access documents electronically, and to incorporate digital communication into parliamentary practice.

The modernized Standing Orders mean that this Parliament is

now a paperless Parliament, or eParliament. Closing comments. Honourable Members, today's launch is— today's launch, in the presence of so many of those who have served before, those who are aspiring to serve, and the people who will— who will— who we will serve, are not simply the introduction of new digital tools.

Together, they are a statement about the kind of Parliament we aspire to be: a Parliament that is transparent, accessible, innovative, and connected to the people it serves. As we celebrate 50 years of constitutional advancement in the Turks and Caicos Islands, it is fitting that we also embrace the many innovations that have been launched today and the modernized Standing Orders, because these modernizations help to ensure that our democratic institutions remain accessible, transparent, resilient, and prepared for the years ahead. By combining the new Parliament website, the Parliament YouTube channel, the Hansard platform, and the eParliament, we are creating new opportunities for current and future Members of Parliament and our citizens through the length and breadth of these Turks and Caicos Islands to understand, engage with, and participate in our democratic process.

I encourage every citizen, every student, every researcher, every journalist, and every current and former Member of Parliament to explore these new resources and to make full use of them. Together, we are strengthening transparency, enhancing public engagement, and building a more accessible Parliament for the future. Thank you. May God continue to bless each of you as He blesses these beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands.

I will now ask our technical team to please play a very short video of eParliament. Please look at the monitors. Okay, thank you very much. We have a presentation to make, but before we do that, we have 2 more presentations to make, in the Parliament. So can you please assist me, Madam Clerk?

I would also like to call on the Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment. Honourable members, we have a presentation to make, and so I will now like to call on the Honourable Premier to make the motion. Hon. Premier.

PRESENTATION OF SOUL OF A NATION TO THE PARLIAMENT LIBRARY

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege and the pleasure of enjoying the confidence of the people of these islands For most of the last 50 years. Today, Mr. Speaker, as part of my gift to the Turks and Caicos, and first of all to the Parliament, I have spent several months writing a book. It was interesting to hear the Bishop this morning speak about the soul of a nation, because the book is entitled The Soul of a Nation: A People's Story of Governance, Growth, and Belonging.

And let me say, it's not an autobiography. It is a chronicle Of the last 50 years with a background from previous, leading into 1976 and today. The book is about the story, a people's story of governance, growth, and belonging, and it does record the happenings of the last 50 years, the good, the bad, and indifferent. Because the soul of a nation is the conscience of that nation, and it's important to be able to speak to that conscience. And that conscience is sometimes seared.

And so it's important as we look for the next toward the next 50 years, that we guard the soul of the nation, guard the conscience of our nation. And so for those— this book is dedicated for those who cared this country before it had a written constitution, those who lived through its many constitutional reckonings, and those who inherit It's still unfinished and will carry it into the future.

Let me say, each generation receives the country in trust. The measure of its time is what it leaves behind. We received, in 1976, the country in trust, and hopefully we have enriched its legacy. Thank you. development and growth and its story, and now we are at the cusp or the entrance of the next 50 years.

For those of us who are still alive, we have an obligation to pass it on to the next generation, and that generation have the obligation of ensuring that they improve on it and pass it on to their generation. So with that said, Mr. Speaker, I like the book was a gift to the National Trust.

We have printed 500 copies of the book, another 500 copies is on order. The National Trust It's planning to have a launch in Grand Turk on the 22nd of this month and one in Provo on the 23rd. It's going to be very important for you to support the trust. It'll be very important for you to support the trust.

Their intention is to— What is the trust? We'll be able to reproduce further copies. And the— I'd like to just again thank all of those who contributed to this book in ways that they may not even be aware of. And so, Mr. Speaker, with that said— Thank you.

I have the pleasure of giving this first copy of the book to the Parliament Library, and in so doing, I have inscribed here, to the Library of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the commemoration of the Ministerial Government. May we continue to bring honour Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I should read the formal resolution. Yes. We had resolved that this Honourable Parliament accepts the presentation of the book Soul of a Nation as a gift to the Parliament Library on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to second that motion.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, be it resolved That this Honourable Parliament accepts the

presentation of the book Soul of a Nation as a gift to the Parliament's Library on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. Aye.

The ayes have it. Thank you very much, Hon. Premier, for your presentation of your book, your first book, to the Parliament Library, and we will certainly accept that. I accept that on behalf of the Parliament, and we will place it in the Parliament after the official launch on the 22nd. Honourable Members, we will now have the unveiling of the nameplate outside of the building and also to view the Honour Guard.

So this portion of the programme has ended, and I would now like to call on the Honourable Premier to move for adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this House stands adjourned sine die.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament now stands adjourned. All rise.