



Commonwealth Youth Parliament

November 6-10, 2016
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

CY
P8

DEBATES OF THE

EIGHTH COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

(HANSARD)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016

Morning House Proceedings



THE HONOURABLE LINDA REID, SPEAKER

**LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

Honourable Rick Hansen, CC, OBC British Columbia, Canada

**SPEAKER
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

Honourable Linda Reid Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

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Hon. Oliver Nacey	Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Aged Care
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Hon. Kareina Mohammed	Minister of Social Development
Hon. Farah Hussain	Deputy Leader & Minister of Foreign Policy
Hon. Connor Mycroft	Minister of Defence
Hon. Mark Munnich	Minister of Indigenous and Cultural Affairs
Hon. Sara Aslam	Minister of Justice
Hon. Jordan Kerr	Government Whip and Minister Responsible for Youth
Elise Delpiano	Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition
Aaron McDonnell	Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Davey Haughton	Opposition Whip
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Jody Aldridge	Falkland Islands	Aaron McDonnell	Australia
Sara Aslam	Pakistan	Jared Avanti McGill	Cayman Islands
Barbara Ojone Awulu	Nigeria	Kareina Mohammed	Trinidad and Tobago
Danish Bhutto	Pakistan	Mark Munnich	Australia
Rebecca Cross	England	Jamie Murray	Scotland
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Laura Elliott	Wales	Christine Wambui Ndiritu	Kenya
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Essalene Martin	Montserrat	Robert Winspear	Jersey

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016

The House met at 10:32 a.m.

[Hon. Linda Reid in the chair.]

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Hon. Members, this House will be led in prayer by Davey Haughton.

Davey Haughton: Almighty God, Supreme Creator and sustainer of the universe, as we come now, recommencing the proceedings of this Commonwealth Youth Parliament, we ask for your divine guidance. May our deliberations be tempered with respect, reason and dignity, as we dedicate ourselves to parliamentary democracy in the service of our commonwealth of countries. Amen.

Routine Business

Ministerial Statements

APPOINTMENT OF NEW MINISTERS

Hon. Ashvini Savanthrapadian: I rise to make a ministerial statement. I would like to announce two new members of our cabinet: the Hon. Mark Munnich, Minister of Indigenous and Cultural Affairs; and the Hon. Sara Aslam, Minister of Justice. These new appointments reflect this government's commitment to work with indigenous peoples as full partners in our country's economy and society and to ensure fair and adequate access to justice and transparency in government.

We understand that the opposition is also putting forward a Minister of Aging and a Minister of Youth. The Progressive Party will designate these portfolios within existing ministerial responsibilities. The Aging portfolio will be held by the Minister of Health, and the Youth portfolio will be held by the House Leader.

Elise Delpiano: I wish to rise to make a shadow ministerial statement. The opposition has appointed new shadow ministers: a shadow minister for Indigenous and Cultural Affairs, being Danish Bhutto; the shadow minister for Justice, Rebecca Cross; an opposition spokesperson for Youth, Jenae Whittaker; and an opposition spokesperson for Age Care, Gemma Finn — to reflect the opposition's commitments to these following portfolios and ensure that we hold the government to account.

[1035]



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Introductions by Youth Parliamentarians

Jody Aldridge: I would just like to take this time to wish my hon. colleague Mackenzie a happy birthday and hope that you will all join me in wishing her a happy birthday.

[Happy Birthday was sung.]

[Applause.]

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Well done. I can share with you that we don't sing often in our Legislative Assembly.

Any further introductions?

Nicholas Hawkes: I would like to take this time to thank the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and members of Tynwald for the opportunity to represent my nation at this prestigious event.

In particular, I would like to thank the hon. Speaker of the House of Keys, Juan Watterson, who himself is a former youth parliamentarian. His commitment to ensuring that the young people of the island have the ability to engage with parliament does not go unnoticed.

We on the Isle of Man would like to remind anyone that will listen — and even if you don't — that we are oldest continuous parliament in the world. But that does not mean we are resistant to change. I know that the lessons which I learn here and the experiences which I share will not fall on deaf ears in the court of Tynwald. I look forward to working with all of you.

Rea Vanterpool: I take this opportunity to wish all British Virgin Islanders a happy Culture Week when we celebrate it in our territory next week. It will be a time of cultural sharing through food, storytelling and our cultural music, which is called fungi music.

Yesterday I wore my bow tie, which is made from the fabric for our national dress, in anticipation of this joyous celebration. I invite all my fellow parliamentarians to find the BVI on the map and come visit us sometime.

Barbara Awulu: I am Barbara Awulu, from a beautiful part of West Africa known as Nigeria. I must say it is a rare opportunity to be here. I want to thank the CPA for that. I look forward to learning a lot from everyone here before the end of this conference.

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We, the government, look forward to the contributions and cooperation of the opposition in today's proceedings.

Introduction of Bills

BILL M201 — COMMONWEALTHLAND RENAMING ACT

Sheldon Paul presented a bill intituled Commonwealthland Renaming Act.

Sheldon Paul: I move that a bill entitled the Commonwealthland Renaming Act, in short — and in long form, an act to rename the Commonwealth Land — of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper, be introduced and now read a first time.

Motion approved.

Sheldon Paul: Madame Speaker, thank you for providing me this opportunity to speak, and thank you to all my fellow youth parliamentarians for affording me this chance to hear me out.

A name of a country encapsulates elements of its history, its culture, and should reflect its citizenry as well. It should be a source of pride that all citizens can feel an emotional affinity with and one they can take to heart and feel proud to carry around the world, especially in a world that is so globalized as the one in which we live.

Rather than accurately encapsulating the diverse modern society represented by the members of this Legislature, the name of our country, Commonwealthland, is steeped in colonialist overtones. The fact is, many of us wish to cast aside, if you will, the mantle of colonialism that has been levied upon us and move ahead in terms of a new, progressive and modern future for our country.

There is little very real emotional connection between us, the citizens, and the name of the country. A name is synonymous with identity and indigeneity and is crucial to help us shape our own new, emerging national identity. In order to ameliorate this situation, I propose that this act will accept citizens' suggestions from across the country, which will then be narrowed down into a shortlist by a multipartisan parliamentary committee drawn proportionately from the House's makeup. Then this shortlist, once it's created by this parliamentary committee, will be submitted to a national plebiscite.

[1040]

Despite our fresh, popular mandate, we wish to continue



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to demonstrate our continued willingness to commit to multipartisanship, the people's will and national unity.

I move that the bill be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill M201, Commonwealthland Renaming Act, introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: Madame Speaker, I rise to move that the bills placed on notice for today entitled the Devolution of Health Care Services Act and the National Identity Act be placed on orders of the day for the first reading at the next sitting day after today.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): I believe you're introducing and first reading.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: That's correct. We're requesting that we move to have the first reading of these bills done tomorrow.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): I am in your hands.

Youth Parliamentarians' Statements

SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Jamie Murray: Meeting these young parliamentarians has been no short of an absolute pleasure. Can I please reiterate my words when I said yesterday that to represent Scotland as a whole is an honour and a privilege? I'd like to take this opportunity to convey how truly grateful I am for this wonderful opportunity.

I was duly elected a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament on the 15th of March 2015. It was, and still is, a huge honour to represent the young people of Argyll and Bute, my local constituency.

From Tiree to Tarbert, from Oban to Rothesay, it is a fascinating area with a rich history, and I would encourage all members here today, if the opportunity presents itself, to please take a trip to Argyll and Bute.

The Scottish Youth Parliament represents all of Scotland's young people. Our affection for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens to and values the meaningful participation of its children and its young people.

We have approximately 160 democratically elected members who listen to and recognize the issues that are most important to

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young people. We ensure that their voices are heard by decision-makers. In Scotland, we exist to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them and campaign to effect the change that they wish to see. Currently, as a youth parliament, our campaign focuses on the mental health of young people. It's called Speak Your Mind.

I think I speak for many of the young parliamentarians here today when I say that it's fascinating learning how other countries and organizations operate around the Commonwealth. The different means of engaging young people and involving them in the political process, the vital relationships young parliamentarians have with their respective elected governments and, also, the passion that every person here has to improve the lives of young people — I think it's inspiring, I think it's empowering, and I think it's truly educational.

I'd like to finish by thanking the CYP for what has, so far, been an invaluable experience. I look forward to the proceedings ahead.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN KASHMIR

Danish Bhutto: It is an honour to address the august House with the mentors and the hon. Youth parliamentarians from the Commonwealth countries. The CPA platform is indeed vital in unifying the Commonwealth nations.

Commonwealth Youth Parliament is instrumental in promoting regional cooperation for strengthening democracy, ensuring accountability and good governance through parliamentary diplomacy. The CPA, through its member parliaments, has been playing a phenomenal role in promoting peace, coexistence and harmony for progress and prosperity.

Madame Speaker, article 3 of the universal declaration of human rights categorically states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." I beg to call the attention of the House to the plight of conflicted areas of the world, particularly Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir.

It pains my heart to announce before this august House that the sorry state of affairs there are a sheer violation of human rights. Unfortunately, human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir are an ongoing phenomenon.

[1045]

The abuses range from mass extrajudicial killings; forced disappearances, making women half-widows; to torture; rape; and sexual abuse — not to mention political repression and the suppression of freedom of speech. According to Amnesty International, over 100,000 people in Kashmir have been martyred



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by the occupying forces, while over 8,000 people disappeared — not to forget the recent killing of young activists.

Injustice anywhere is a great threat to justice everywhere. For the love of peaceful coexistence and harmony, I urge the hon. youth parliamentarians, in particular, and the Commonwealth community at large to push for Kashmiris' right to self-determination in light of the UN Security Council resolutions. Let us come together to stop this sheer violation of human rights. I thank you all.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Mackenzie Taylor: Madame Speaker and fellow parliamentarians, I would first like to express gratitude for the impeccable singing.

I would also like to point notice to the progress that New Brunswick has made pertaining to women's rights and women's representation in politics. Also, recent legislation has been passed that enables individuals whose parents make below an entitled threshold free access to post-secondary education.

Firstly, New Brunswick has largely been considered an old boys' club for politics. However, government and political parties have made initiatives to be more inclusive. This was included in the last federal election. We have sent three women to the House of Commons, and we also have several females in the current Brian Gallant cabinet. This is major, and this task has not been easy. But I am proud to stand here today on behalf of those females.

Secondly, the legislation that enables equal access to education is very important. This is because a decision can only be made if you are educated. This is not only necessary for now but also necessary to cultivate a good education in the future.

I encourage fellow parliamentarians to take part in these initiatives in their respective countries, and I would like to wish you a good day.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Aaron McDonnell: I rise today to present my statement to the House. I'd like to thank everyone here for the opportunity to speak and to provide an insight into myself and into the area that I represent.

I come from New South Wales, a country area of Australia, and I would say that I am a product of regional and rural New South Wales. I was born of humble beginnings — parents that are farmers, the first to attend university. My parents gave up much

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to send me to boarding school and then off to university. I'm very honoured and privileged to be here today and thank all of you for your indulgence in letting me speak.

There are three things that are most important to me in my life, and they are faith, family and friends. My commitment to my faith, which is sometimes quite difficult given the personal circumstances in which I find myself, and also the importance of family and friends sustain me and have sustained me throughout my life.

I think it's the values that our friends and our family provide us... You know, they provide us with the encouragement and the strength to go on and to continue to do what we do and to achieve the great things that we have and continue to do.

Further to that, it's also very fortunate for me to be part of the opposition, a party that actually supports free enterprise, individual liberties and the lack of intrusion of government in our lives. They're values that I aspire to in my own life. Learning the value of true work — the value of putting in the effort and seeing the efforts or the fruits of your own work — is a very rewarding experience. Being here in Canada today representing my state as a rural and regional person is a true honour and a real privilege.

I'm getting a bit emotional, actually. There's really nothing much more to add, other than I'm very grateful to be here, and I'm very, very happy to have met so many interesting, enthusiastic and committed young individuals. Thank you very much for your friendship. May we continue to deliberate.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA AND ISRAEL

Hon. Sara Aslam: Fundamental rights, peace and justice are all principles that Commonwealthland should be exemplary in upholding. My role as Minister of Justice will ensure that this government will do exactly that for its citizens.

[1050]

My question is, however: what about the people who are not blessed with such a government? The reality is that the Kashmiri people and the Palestinian people are in such a situation. At the hands of the Indian government and at the hands of the Israeli government, they suffer human rights abuses, torture, killing. They suffer murder, kidnapping and disappearances, and they suffer rape, starvation and more.

What do we do as part of the international community? We seem to turn a blind eye. We watch whilst human lives are being slaughtered. We watch whilst innocent lives are being treated like caged animals at the hands of butchers.



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Respected young parliamentarians, we are letting India disrespect the UN Security Council resolution, which calls for the right of self-determination of the Kashmiris. We are doing nothing, despite Israel being condemned multiple times by the UN Security Council, by the UNHRC — hundreds, if not thousands, of times. The reality is that we are just as capable as India and Israel in allowing such human rights abuses, in allowing this brutality and in preventing justice.

My plea, therefore, to you all is that we need to lead the international community in peacefully but firmly putting an end to such genocide. This needs to be done through the right of self-determination and peace. Let us be a country we are proud of — not just nationally but also internationally. Let us gain the respect of the international community, and let us fulfil our duty towards fellow human beings, because human lives matter.

CAYMAN ISLANDS BRANCH
OF COMMONWEALTH
PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Jared McGill: I bring warm greetings on behalf of the Cayman Islands CPA branch. During my stay here, I hope to gain an invaluable experience that I can share with the CPA on the best practices that can be adopted to help with smooth flow of democracy back home.

I would also like to thank you for being the host country for this Commonwealth Youth Parliament.

COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT
CONFERENCE

Hon. Oliver Nacey: My name is Oliver Nacey, and as a proud New Zealander, I could not have wished for a better opportunity, both for my own personal advancement but also to steer my mind from a recent devastating rugby loss at the hands of the Irish. As a Canadian resident and student, I thank Madame Speaker, the CPA and all of the staff for bringing such an important conference to our soil.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate all my fellow youth parliamentarians for making it to this conference. This week I urge you all to reflect on how momentous this occasion is for our future and the future of our nations. While in chamber and elsewhere, let us learn from each other, stay respectful to one another and be humbled by the thought that we are the future leaders of the Commonwealth, the future actors for positive change around the world.

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Oral Questions

YOUTH TRAINING

Elise Delpiano: My question is to the Premier. A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way. Throughout the last two days' proceedings, this government does not seem to know the way, go the way, and has continually failed to show the way.

Why is it that the government, which allegedly cares so much about youth employment, only created a portfolio for youth after the opposition raised this as an issue and appointed an opposition spokesperson for youth?

Hon. Ashvini Savanthrapadian: Youth employment, investment in youth and youth rights have been on the forefront of this government's agenda from the very beginning. We have made our way, on this side of the House, based on policies and plans directed fundamentally at advancement of youth employment and education. This is inherent in all the ministerial portfolios that this government holds, and this is going to be seen through all the initiatives that we put forward.

[1055]

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Stefanie Panesar: Mental health care in Commonwealthland experienced a crisis. With the closure of one of our mental health hospitals — Riverview — in June 2012, we now have an increase in emergency mental health hospital visits and are on track to hit a record high come December.

Looking at the first half of this year, our general hospital and city hospital saw 5,110 people experience a mental health crisis. A comparable number for 2015 is 4,895. That's a great increase. Our ER cannot effectively manage this influx of patients. The ER wait time has gone up every year. A full ER is not a safe ER for patients.

Could the Minister of Health be so kind as to come forward with a long-term plan for mental health? Clearly, band-aid tactics are falling short.

Hon. Oliver Nacey: Obviously, as a government that has been recently elected by the population, our first idea is to make sure that the people of our nation are looked after, no matter what that is.

Our health plan is robust. We intend to redefine "universal" and ensure that both geographically and in terms of all breadth



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of coverage, we offer the best health care service we can to our citizens. By working with the public delivery system, we can ensure that the health of our people stays in their hands and, through the government that they have rightfully elected, ensure that it is not-for-profit and accessible.

To address your point specifically, by launching a public consultation to ensure our people are getting the health care they want and need.... Thank you for bringing forth statistics on mental health. We also intend to look into offering palliative care, dental care and addiction programs to ensure that our citizens are getting what they need.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Jenae Whittaker: My question is again for the Minister of Health. I notice the trend of asking questions towards the Minister of Health, but my question really is a concern from the political party proper, which states: “Free universal health and dental care within a public delivery system.”

My concern is: if government provides a free universal health care plan for their people, where are they going to find the funds to pay these practitioners and doctors? With this, when people go to work, they look for pay. How is government going to fund these doctors and practitioners? This is a demanding area of careers where they expect to be paid well. How are they going to look forward to being paid well? If you have cheap income, then you have cheap labour. Even with good pay, how does government plan to regulate these jobs, which are vital for communities’ well-being?

I have a story to share from back home, where I’m from, in our health system. I had a family friend who went to our government health care system and met with a practitioner and doctor, claiming that he had stomach issues. Now, the doctor sent him home, saying: “Oh no, it’s just bowel issues that you have.” But in fact, he had stomach cancer. Because this practitioner didn’t rightfully send him to the right person or do proper treatments or look after him carefully, he suffered very deeply from the cancer, which he had to go to get further treatment for.

Now, my question is: where is the funding? Yes, we are hearing good plans and ideas from the government, but they are failing to provide us with a financial plan. It’s not that we support the government, just: how can we support the government without a detailed plan in which the finances are being spread out, shared evenly? With the other political party profiles, it’s just....

What I’m getting at is that the government is throwing money

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at these areas of interest in our communities to try and help them. But again, how are they going to fund these paycheques? How do they plan to cover the costs that it would incur?

Hon. Jordan Kerr: I understand that this question has been directed to the Minister of Health. However, I will be answering on his behalf due to the fact that this question focuses primarily on the financing nature as opposed to the actual policies of the Health portfolio itself.

First of all, I'd like to thank the hon. member for actually saying that we have good plans. Thank you very much. You're the first person in the opposition that has read and understood our plans for health.

In terms of how we're planning on financing these, we're planning on working with businesses. We're planning on working with the community, working together, working to develop new legislation, working with local communities to find ways to fund essential services.

[1100]

We're planning on listening to people. You brought up issues earlier about how essential services were failing under your former government. We've just taken over this government. We're ready....

Interjections.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): This House will come to order.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: Thank you, Madame Speaker.

We're ready to make the changes that this country needs. The only thing that we're waiting on is the opposition to sit down with us, to work with us, to understand our plans, to ask us questions — specifically, “What are your plans?” not “How do you plan on financing this?” or “Why are you doing nothing?” Why not ask us a question on exactly what our plans are?

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Is the member rising on a supplementary question?

Jenae Whittaker: Yes.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Please proceed.

Jenae Whittaker: Well, the Whip kind of gave me an answer, but it's not the answer I'm looking for. My ask is: where is the



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money going to come from to fund these services?

I understand that governments get some of their money from taxes. I'm doing an economics class right now, where when government raises taxes, one of the outcomes is that it lowers the economy's GDP. Now, when the economy's GDP falls, that means there's less money coming in. If there's less money coming in, where are the funds going to come from?

Now, I understand that government is looking for areas to invest, to improve the community, but again, where is the money going to come from to fund these plans that they have? When I mean plans.... These are basically rough-draft plans where they're giving their main points of ideas of what they want to do, but they're not explaining exactly how they're going to do it with what money they have.

Again, I notice that the members of government keep saying that they were voted in by the people. Guess what. We were voted in by the people too. We are here for a reason as well. They keep saying that we are opposed to them, but again, we are called the opposition for a reason. Now, we're not opposing the government overall with their ideas and plans; we're just opposing certain points of their plans.

So my question is: where is the money going to come from to fund all these plans that they have?

Hon. Robert Winspear: Thank you for your concern about our health service. We, too, feel that it's fundamentally important.

Now, specifically addressing your question about where the money is going to come from. We have been elected on a mandate to support high public sector investment. This necessarily entails a restructuring of the tax system, which promotes a more equal distribution of wealth. This equal distribution of wealth will make up the shortfall necessary to implement our ambitious social policies. This, in turn, will invest in our public infrastructure, which we believe is the fundamental cornerstone of a successful and, equally important, a sustainable economy.

U.S. GENERAL ELECTION

Andriy Krugliak: As we all are aware, the United States is currently undergoing a general election, the outcome of which may be catastrophic for this country. Since this government has just been elected, my question to the Foreign Minister is: did the previous government leave a plan in place to deal with such a catastrophe?

Interjections.

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Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Members will come to order.

Hon. Farah Hussain: Thank you to my esteemed colleague for your really insightful question. Unfortunately, the party opposite, when in government, did not have the foresight to put together a plan of action in relation to a change of government in one of our neighbours.

Andriy Krugliak: My question, to the Foreign Minister again, is: how does this lack of foresight affect our country and put it in danger?

Hon. Farah Hussain: Thank you for that supplementary question. The party opposite have put the welfare of our country and our citizens at risk, and they should be ashamed of themselves.

Interjections.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Members, the Chair will hear the answer and the question.

Hon. Farah Hussain: That is why I will be working with my civil servants in the Foreign Ministry to ensure that we are ready for any outcome of the election today.

[1105]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Sonniel Pickering: The government, through the Ministry of Education and Training, has proposed universal education for all ages for post-secondary education. Understanding that the government does not hold the monopoly on educational institutions and therefore must approach privately owned institutions, how does the government intend to get the privately owned institutions on board? And how will they fund this collaboration, knowing fully well that these privately owned institutions carry high tuition rates?

Also, with the implementation of this universal education for all ages, the government will run the risk of finding the challenges of overpopulating the learning institutions and the problem of understaffing and underqualified teachers. How does the Ministry of Education plan to deal with this matter without running the risk of running the government broke and/or placing these institutions in debt because the government cannot pay the fees? Would the Minister of Education please respond?



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Hon. Dikeledi Sekese: All in all, partnership, working together, can do the best.

Sonniel Pickering: Madame Speaker, she sounded well, but she did not answer the question. The question was: how will the government, through the Ministry of Education and Training, fund these initiatives? Collaboration is well, but collaboration needs funding. How will the Ministry of Education and Training fund these initiatives?

Hon. Jordan Kerr: I believe that the Education Minister has actually answered that question quite well. It was two words: working together.

SENIORS CARE

Gemma Finn: My question is for the Premier, because I don't think the minister I'd like to ask actually exists yet.

Within my jurisdiction, I'm fortunate enough to volunteer with a charity dedicated to maintaining good mental health amongst the aging and the elderly. As many of you know, almost 20 percent of our population is over the age of 65.

I speak to these people on a weekly basis, and they each tell me the same thing: they are tired. They are tired of being ignored by their government. They are tired of a government that overlooks the decline in health care quality. And finally, they are tired of the unsustainable nature of our health and social care systems.

To the government's credit, I believe they have taken a reactive measure to the opposition's actions — which isn't the first time this has happened. It leaves me to ask the question: who is really running the country?

The opposition believes that each one of these people is a credit to our entire nation. After a lifetime of fighting wars, working hard and paying their taxes, do they not deserve to feel safe, dignified and useful in their retirement?

My question is: how will the hon. youth parliamentarian pledge her commitment to serving our aging population with the respect, consideration and gratitude that they deserve?

Hon. Oliver Nacey: I thank you for your question, and I also thank my cabinet for bestowing the portfolio for aged care on me. You are right; the cabinet does have this in control. You ask who is running our country. Well, it's us.

Ultimately, we do intend to take into account the needs of every single citizen of Commonwealthland, including those who require palliative care, who require home care and community

care. That is why we'll be going out into communities with a public consultation to ensure that the needs of every citizen of Commonwealthland are met in relation to the public health care system.

[End of question period.]

Orders of the Day

Hon. Jordan Kerr: I call the second reading of Bill 1, entitled the Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act.

[1110]

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 1 — YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP AND INTERNSHIP ACT

Avery Roberge-Eadie: Good morning, everyone. I rise today and speak on behalf of myself and my constituents of Alberta and our support for Bill 1. The Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act poses many great opportunities for youth, our economy and small businesses in Commonwealthland.

For the Progressive Party, this is our first step in completing and fulfilling our plan. Now, as we all know, Commonwealthland is experiencing a fluctuating economy, and the previous government has left us scrambling to keep up in this era of globalization.

For businesses, this provides an incentive to create jobs and encourage innovation. In the state of our economy now, the grants we provide are necessary for businesses to expand and welcome new employees. Not only are there more helping hands around the business, but this gives the company exposure to the youth and encourages them to find a permanent job there. By investing in our local businesses, we invest in our future economy.

Youth parliamentarians here, I understand the value of getting exposure and, hopefully, some experience and a job before I decide to jump into it as a career. The Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act gives youth that opportunity to experience and learn before committing. Looking into the future, this could create a more knowledgeable generation, choosing careers that better suit them and fulfil their interest.

Now, I'd like to get a little bit more personal. In my own life, I work as a page at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. It has given me a wonderful experience of working alongside MLAs and politicians and understanding what they do on a day-to-day



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business. This is a student-driven program, and it has given me exposure to what MLAs do and what, possibly, I might want to look into as a future career. Without this opportunity, and also without this CYP opportunity, I would not have the opportunity to look into being a politician as a career.

So I encourage my colleagues across the aisle to support this bill, to support grants that are going to give businesses the opportunities that I have been given to other youth. Give people the opportunity to experience careers, to experience jobs, to get exposure to real life in the workforce before they have to commit to a career — before they pour all this money into getting an education, entering into a career and then, unfortunately, changing, because they didn't understand what was demanded of them in that job.

So, please, I encourage everyone to support this bill and support the Progressive Party plan.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: My apologies for the confusion in the order of proceedings. I now call that we read the bill a second time with the assistance of the minister.

Hon. Kareina Mohammed: I move that the bill be now read a second time.

I thank you, Madame Speaker. I'm grateful for this opportunity to stand before this honourable House and present this bill for a second time. This government is solution-oriented. We are focused and progressive. As a result, we are here to tackle the very real problem of youth unemployment in Commonwealthland.

Youth unemployment has skyrocketed to 6 percent in Commonwealthland, and this is a real problem. But have no fear. The Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act is here. This bill, once implemented, will reduce the percentage of youth who are unemployed by 65 percent. There would be a great number of apprenticeships and internships available for our precious youth of Commonwealthland.

[1115]

“How would it work?” you may ask. We would provide employment opportunities, learning and education about the ethos of the workplace for our dear, beloved youth. There would be a massive public awareness campaign on the employment opportunities that would be available for our youth of Commonwealthland. We must provide these opportunities if we want our youth to be progressive. Their business is our business.

I'd like to refer to the social learning theory by one Albert Bandura. How does this even relate to apprenticeship, internship?

It speaks about the observance of modeling behaviours that will guide an individual on their path through life.

We all have mentors here at Youth Parliament, and they are to guide us through these proceedings. I'd like to then link that to the apprenticeship bill. When our youth is under the apprenticeship system or they are an intern, they will be guided by the person who is employing them, thereby giving them a springboard into the world of business and providing them with the necessary opportunities for employment.

An apprentice, in the true sense of the word, is a person who is learning trade from a skilled employer. An intern is a student or trainee who would be gaining work experience through that opportunity. This Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act will provide guidance and employment for our youth of Commonwealthland.

With regards to Trinidad and Tobago, we have a successful, on-the-job training initiative instituted by our government, and I dare say it is working in our country. This government does not have whimsical dreams about it, because we have seen and we have tested this program. We can, therefore, use other countries as a springboard for our policies.

This would improve the standard of living in Commonwealthland. It would provide opportunities for our youth to delve into the labour market. It will teach our youth responsibility and professionalism. Of course, with an influx of youth into our business, it will create opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Therefore, we desire that the youth of Commonwealthland be progressive. As a result, we must provide the opportunity for progression. This Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act will achieve this goal.

Monique Thomas: Madame Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak to the House.

I believe that a nation's greatest resource is its people, especially young people. My constituency has a population of 2.8 million people. Thirty percent of that is young people, which equals 840,000 youths. Thirty percent of the 840,000 youths are unattached youths. What do I mean by this? Those are youths that are not employed. They are not in any school. They are not participating in any training programs.

Based on recent crime statistics, we have seen where youth, from the age of 16 to 24, are involved in major crimes. That is 49.4 percent of major crimes that youth from 16 to 24 are involved in. So 98.7 percent of that 49.7 represents males. Homicidal violence



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is a leading social problem — 77 percent of which is gun violence. These activities are generally male-on-male, youth-on-youth and poor-on-poor killings.

[1120]

Females are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and adolescent pregnancies. The culture of “granny” or “sugar daddy” is our youth’s economic reality and their social survival strategy. This results in an inability to negotiate condom use, which leads to teenage pregnancy, HIV and STI infections which often go untreated, among other social and economic problems that we face.

Thus, the issues affecting our nation surpass the issue as to where we will get the money from. Based on the issues presented, the government has to spend money on the health care. There are mothers who are having children, and they can’t afford the health care, so the government has to provide the finances for that health care currently. We have to provide vaccinations for SDIs, HIV and other diseases. We have to provide vaccinations also for these children whose mothers can’t afford the necessary health care.

We also have to spend money on security and defence. The government then has to put a lot of resources in policing, since crime is rampant. We have to invest in prisons to house these criminals and to provide the means of rehabilitating those criminals. The court system takes up a lot of finances, because justice is for all.

It is my view that we shift the focus. Rather than waiting until the young persons die, become parents while needing a parent themselves or find themselves at the wrong end of the law, we should fix the problem.

A true businessman knows how to take risks, as he hopes to get a worthwhile benefit in the future. The opposition mocks our vision, a vision that will lead to prosperity. A part of this vision is the bill tabled today. In order for a prosperous tomorrow, we the government have decided to bet on this bill. It will aid in the reduction of social issues that currently plague our society. It will have a ripple effect, in that companies will see customers exercise choice in favour of those who participate in this program. The level of unemployment among our young people will decrease. Poverty will decrease as more income will penetrate in family households.

The government will benefit from income tax, GCT and corporate revenues that come from this program. The bill will allow for innovation and creativity within the workplace. This is as a result of the young people, because they will bring innovation, flexibility, high energy and an understanding of the emerging technologies to the workplace, which will then immerse within our society.

The bill is the vision of tomorrow. The Progressive Party will lead to prosperity.

Hon. Mark Munnich: Firstly, I commend my colleague the Minister for Social Development for introducing this bill to the House. What I see in this bill comprises of a few aspects that are crucial around our young people — reducing unemployment; providing jobs for our youth; and importantly, investing in our young people — which it's clear that this opposition doesn't support.

This government took to the election investing in our young people to ensure that our youth — our future leaders — have the best start in life by having access to those opportunities to gain employment as an apprentice or an intern.

[1125]

For this opposition to oppose our plans that we've introduced to the House would be to deny the positive futures of our young leaders of tomorrow — the opportunity to gain exposure in the workplace and, ultimately, to be employed.

Within my community, I draw an emphasis on how important this bill is, particularly with young indigenous men, who are more likely to go to jail than go to university or be employed, which I certainly find is unacceptable, and this needs to stop.

I call on this opposition and the government to support this bill and, importantly, support the futures of our young people and our young futures of tomorrow. This is a very important issue, and we need to address this, for this bill. I commend the bill.

Sonniel Pickering: I want to, first, declare to the government that we are not here to oppose the plans that you have set before us. We are simply asking one question: how? How will you implement? How will you fund? How will you establish the things that you have laid before this House?

I want to speak to the bill in general. From what I have seen, this bill is not comprehensive. The bill speaks to implementing apprenticeship and internship programs. However, the bill does not speak to training and educating these young people to be qualified for these positions that they will fill at the different levels of employment.

I realize that the government's vision for educating and for training is simply for post-secondary education to help to reduce unemployment in youth. However, I will speak on behalf of the Caribbean, where we have unemployed youth who did not get the opportunity to finish secondary education. These unemployed youth who did not finish secondary education add to the unemployment rate of their respective jurisdictions.



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How, then, is the government going to educate and train those that did not get to finish their high school or their secondary education? How will the government now train them, educate them, qualify them for this internship and this apprenticeship program?

There is nothing wrong with what you have laid here, in terms of principle, but we want to know how. This is just a skeleton. We don't need skeletons. We need actions. We need plans. We need tangible things that we can go to the people and say: "The government is willing to implement this, by this process." There is no process. There are just words on paper.

Please, Minister of Education, enlighten me as to how you will educate not just the post-secondary but those who did not get to finish their secondary education. How?

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Please take your seat. Someone has risen on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Jordan Kerr: The opposition member has referred to us as "you," and I understand that is out of line with the order of proceedings.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Please direct your remarks through the Chair. Please continue.

Sonniel Pickering: Well, it is good to see that the government is listening to what I'm saying and realizing what I'm saying. My apologies to the government.

Debate Continued

Sonniel Pickering: The government has laid before us a bill that is not comprehensive, as I said before. It is not inclusive of our jurisdictions of the Commonwealth, and I would plainly say that the government should take this bill — take it back into caucus — make the relevant changes, and bring it back to this honourable House so that we can deliberate and debate, properly, as to a comprehensive bill to not only just implement programs of apprenticeship and internship but to educate the young people who are going to take these programs. Train them. Qualify them to not only enter the programs but to capitalize on the opportunities that are given unto them.

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I speak to the Minister of Education. Please take into consideration that the bulk of unemployed youth in the Commonwealth are those that did not get to finish their secondary education. So while we look at post-secondary education, bear in mind that the unemployed youth who do not have secondary education need the government's help as well.

[1130]

Don't be partial in your deliverance of help. Help all, or help none.

Erin McAuley: Today I rise to speak about youth unemployment and why I do believe that it's vital that we tackle it.

Being unemployed is a stressful life event that directly reduces an individual's well-being. Youth unemployment results in a range of both short-term and long-term costs, not only for the individual concerned but also for their families, dependents and for the wider society and public purse.

Unemployment while being young, especially for long durations, causes permanent scars rather than temporary blemishes. For our young, a spell of unemployment does not end with that spell. It raises the probability of being unemployed in later years and, more likely, for individuals to become dependent on the state rather than themselves.

Unemployment increases mental stresses, malnutrition, low self-esteem and increases the risk of depression. Most worrying, being unemployed while a youth, is that you're at higher risk of becoming suicidal or homeless.

I say it often, and I say it again, that our youth of this country are not just the future, but they're presently affected. So this is why it's vital that the government get their plans right and in action quickly, rather than later.

But I want to use the U.K. as an example of where the government should not be looking to for advice or following from. Because if you're a young person in the U.K., and you're under 25, then you're not paid the same wage as your adult counterparts, despite working the same hours and the same job. It creates tensions amongst ages and increases exploitation among young workers.

The cost of living does not change because a person is under 25. The price of bread and milk does not change because a person is under 25. Between the ages of 16 and 25 in the U.K., you can be married, have a child, have a car and a house of your own to sustain. In the U.K., by law, at 16, you're an adult, yet paid like a child.

I hope the government will take into consideration, when proposing this bill, the worries — and not to look to the U.K. for



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any advice on youth unemployment and discrimination against wages. We in these benches want our young people to flourish, to be strivers not skivers, and I hope the government takes this into consideration.

Aaron McDonnell: I rise to speak on the Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act. This bill does have merit. And of course, the opposition, the party of employment and business, will not, therefore, stand in the road as a roadblock for this bill and what it plans to implement. We are the party of job creation. We are the party of business and enterprise.

However, it isn't the role of government to dictate and direct or, perhaps, mollycoddle, if you like, society in an effort to stimulate our economy. However, it seems that it is actually a plan that this government has. It is hell-bent on pushing forward with this plan to stimulate the economy by creating jobs for young people by adopting and mirroring policies that are akin to countries like China, North Korea and Cuba — one where the goalposts are determined by this government.

I think that the government has been to far too many country fairs where everyone wins a prize, because that's what this government seems to think when it comes to setting benchmarks and setting targets, resting the responsibility with the minister, setting a target that they themselves....

Don't shake your head, because that's what you're actually doing. Your bill actually says that the minister will be setting the targets. The minister will be setting the targets determining the success for the application of the policy. We have yet to see the government's plans as to what the parameters are for these targets.

It has been cited many times today by members of the government that unemployment is at 6 percent and forecast to rise. That is a very worrying figure and a trend that I shudder to think about further — record-high unemployment that this country cannot afford.

[1135]

So I put it to the government. If you smoke cigarettes — one a day, a packet a day — you no doubt get cancer. Changing the brand of cigarettes, however, isn't the solution. You will still get cancer. Stopping the habit is. Perhaps that's something that this government needs to recognize. We can't continue to create programs based on fantasy targets. This government needs to change its habits, otherwise old habits will certainly die hard.

Again, reiterating the opposition's in-principle support for job creation and stimulating the economy and promoting jobs and employing young people, we do support the premise of the

bill. However, I want to suggest that the government, rather than relying on employers following the hapless Minister of Social Development on Twitter and social media for updates on the program, perhaps might like to consider consulting with business, meeting with youth workers, conducting round tables, as the Minister of Health so often and eloquently says: “We will consult with the people.” However, this bill does not, in any way, indicate consultation will take place with business and the people that are actually going to be employing the people who are going to be building the economy for Commonwealthland.

Interjection.

Aaron McDonnell: That’s exactly right, Member of the government. It is shame on your government.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): The member will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Aaron McDonnell: I apologize, Madame Speaker.
Shame on the member, Madame Speaker.

The government needs the advice, and they need the consultation of key stakeholders to determine and to make this bill — which, again, in principle is good — better. These people, the people that they should be consulting with, represent those that are going to be employed — those that, as my hon. colleague said, are without jobs and are without the dignity of employment.

However, this government tells us that they represent the people who voted them in.

Interjection.

Aaron McDonnell: That’s exactly.... You tell us that you represent the people that you....

Interjection.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Member, when a point of order is called, you must take a seat.

Point of Order

Hon. Jordan Kerr: Madame Speaker, just referring back to the Standing Order 8, referring to the government members as “you.”



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Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): The member is so directed to direct his remarks through the Chair.

Aaron McDonnell: I apologize, Madame Speaker.

Debate Continued

Aaron McDonnell: Additionally, this government appears to be on a spending spree. I have no hesitation in saying that: a spending spree like a drunken sailor or a child in a candy shop on payday — well, not that they get paid, because they don't have jobs.

I think that this government continues to have a problem with throwing money at every problem that it encounters. The problem that we continue to see is that this government does not have the funds or the ability to pay for the programs that they wish to put in place. I think that we continue to hear, time after time, that this government is working on a plan or working on plans. There are so many plans and important documents. The filing room must be full to the brim with papers and trees.

However, I think if we have a closer look at the climate change policy of the government, it gives us a clear indicator as to how this government will fund this program. Again, it's a plan, but a plan that I think is deceitful and one that tricks the people that they, again, purport to represent.

The government has a policy in place in regard to tackling climate change where it will increase taxes and pay for government expenditure by placing a carbon tax on the people. Is this the same way that this government will fund the employment and apprenticeship bill — increasing taxes?

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): The member will take his seat. Thank you.

Jenae Whittaker: In regards to the bill, I have noticed that government says that they would establish a Commonwealth apprenticeship fund as a grant for these employers who would hire the youth and train them so they can get the experience they need and the qualifications so they can further better themselves and improve themselves.

I don't think that government should take this fund and take the burden off completely funding this program as a whole. The reason is that it's both the private sector and public sector that provide employment for our youth. It is both the public sector and the private sector's responsibility to better our youth so that they can

push themselves forward to become independent citizens of our society.

[1140]

Now, my comment is that it should be the private sector, along with the employers, who will also pay for this program. Yes, the government is trying to put forward this bill, where they're providing youth with what they need to get it for themselves, but it's both a public sector responsibility and private sector responsibility as to what happens to our youth. It has been youth....

I do say this is a beneficial idea, because it is an opening for students to get into the workforce and to get the experience that they need so that they can further themselves and better themselves so that they can become employable.

Hon. Ashvini Savanthrapadian: I am very pleased to rise and express my support for the Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act. I am equally pleased to note that several members of the opposition have expressed their support, in principle, of this bill. Thank you.

It is interesting that the opposition contends that the government has no plans and has taken no action, yet it also contends that this government appears to be throwing money at everything. I suggest that the opposition picks one coherent argument and runs with it.

This government puts the interests of families and youth at the centre of the work that we do in this Legislative Assembly. This bill is our first step to address challenges faced by youth in today's job market, challenges left behind by the previous government's ill-considered policies.

It establishes programs and initiatives which both create opportunities for youth to enter the workforce and incentivize industry to partner with government and open their doors to an eager and capable demographic. This bill sets tangible and measurable targets for reduction in rates of youth unemployment.

The future of Commonwealthland relies so heavily on its youth. This bill is a clear step, a clear action by this government to invest in its people, to invest in a sustainable future and to invest in progress for a better Commonwealthland.

Hon. Ashvini Savanthrapadian moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: With leave, I call the second reading of the Commonwealthland Renaming Act.



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Leave granted.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL M201 — COMMONWEALTHLAND RENAMING ACT

Sheldon Paul: Thank you, Madame Speaker, for providing me the opportunity to speak on this issue once again, and thank you to all my fellow youth parliamentarians for once again granting me this opportunity to speak to you. I wish to reiterate a couple of the previous points that I outlined beforehand.

The cultivation of a national identity is vital to the sustenance of a nation. Without a firm national identity, without a firm laying out of principles that a nation can stand for, it is difficult to maintain national cohesion. We as a people of the Commonwealth....

This concept of the Commonwealth is a concept that is steeped in the very idea of getting beyond the traumas of colonialism, to overcoming a lot of heritage that is claimed to be heritage, but only in name. In actuality, it represents oppression, oppression of millions of people over centuries all throughout the world.

We as the Commonwealth are moving past the stage of the empire, but of course, the Commonwealthland, in and of itself, represents a harkening to British imperial systems, and we wish to amend that with this act.

The fact is, while no doubt this is a state drawing its heritage from various highly diverse areas throughout the world, the name Commonwealthland is still inextricably associated with Europeanism. It's vitally important for us as a nation to move beyond this paradigm — this very limited Eurocentric paradigm — and to embrace the true diversity that is represented here in this chamber.

Sky Losier: To be honest, I was a little shocked when I received a bill written by hand. If that speaks to anything from the plans, I'm a little concerned.

The details are the details. I am frankly appalled that this government is trying to distract the good citizens of Commonwealthland from the real problems our citizens are facing. They're pulling these ideas out of their back pocket.

[1145]

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Are you rising on a point of order?

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Hon. Jordan Kerr: Madame Speaker, if the hon. member can please refer to the bill as it was introduced into the parliament, which was as a private member's bill, not as a government bill. Thank you.

Sky Losier: I never referred to the bill as a government bill. I referred to this government trying to push through the bill. The bill is sponsored by a government member. I never said this is a government bill.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Through the Chair.

Sky Losier: Through the Chair, Madame Speaker. My apologies.

Continuing. This bill is a distraction to pull the public's attention away from the fault of this government. This government never mentioned... This party never mentioned this in their platform. This is an idea that they've pulled out of thin air. "Our plans aren't working. What shall we do? Let's divide our citizens, create a wedge between our good citizens of Commonwealthland." I find it shameful, absolutely shameful.

This parliament has no mandate to introduce these changes unilaterally. It will cost millions of dollars. This is a frivolous use of taxpayers' dollars. If the government is so serious about this issue, perhaps they could put it forward at the next election in tandem with our national elections.

Interjection.

Sky Losier: A plebiscite costs millions of dollars. We have those every four years for a reason. Why does this government plan on forcing this through our House? It's unacceptable. It is a thwart to our democratic process. It is insult to our citizens. This is a formal abuse of taxpayers' dollars, which we have come to expect from this irresponsible government. I am ashamed.

But all this aside, why does this government want to spend time campaigning on a plebiscite, implementing a plebiscite? These are very complicated.

Our country is facing so many issues — rising sea levels, growing unemployment, longer wait lines in the hospitals, inaccessible education. To sum this all up, the government says: "We have a plan. We have a plan. We're going to throw money in the air and hope it sticks to walls and makes all our plans come together." That's not how economics work. That is not how economics work.

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I'm sorry, Madame Speaker, but this government is bent on imposing unilateral actions onto our citizens, forcing our citizens to cough up more money from their tax dollars to pay for this unwarranted, uncampaigned, unnecessary referendum or plebiscite. There's a perfect opportunity to have this plebiscite. It's at the next election.

If the government is so confident that this is what the citizens want, why don't you campaign on it in the next election and see what they have to say when they go to the polls to vote for you...

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Through the Chair.

Sky Losier: ...and changing our national identity.
Through the Chair. Thank you.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Thank you.

Sky Losier: This government is trying to divide the citizens of Commonwealthland. It's shameful. It's frivolous. It's, frankly, embarrassing. This plebiscite will make us the laughing stock of this world. People will look at us, and they'll say: "Oh, these fools — spending millions of dollars on a plebiscite right after an election. They didn't campaign on this idea."

It's a distraction. It is deceitful to the public. It is unacceptable on so many levels. It's making my blood pressure rise. It's a danger to my health as a member of this chamber. I don't know what to say anymore.

Josh Tordiff: I would like to thank the member for his emotional response to the bill, which was, by the way, a private member's bill. As he referred to the government as a sponsor, I would like to stand, myself, as a private member and a sponsor of this bill.

[1150]

This bill was designed to unify and bring together Commonwealthlanders. This bill was designed with the purpose of renaming the Commonwealthland, as it was introduced by my good friend, Mr. Sheldon Paul....

Interjection.

Josh Tordiff: Well, you can blame.... Excuse me, Your Honour.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Members.

Josh Tordiff: That can be blamed on the scribe and not the government or the introducer of the bill itself.

Interjections.

Josh Tordiff: Thank you. Your Honour, I would like to request that I can speak here.

This act was designed and should be supported by all Members of Parliament, as we are the elected representatives of the people of what we refer to now as Commonwealthland. This act was designed to provide us with the opportunity, as representatives, to understand who we are, where we come from, what it is that we represent.

We come from many different places with many different values. However, the idea of Commonwealthland was introduced to us.... Can anybody here on the floor provide me with the name of who it was that named Commonwealthland?

This act was designed to create a space for our fellow citizens to help us understand what it means to be a member of Commonwealthland. As a member of our elected progressive government, I commemorate my fellow members for providing us with the foresight and integral opportunity to help us unify, with an understanding of who we are and what we stand for.

I ask my peers: who named Commonwealthland?

An Hon. Member: Our founders.

Josh Tordiff: Who are our founders? I will remind you that the idea of Commonwealthland is steeped in colonial vernacular. If you would refer to the statistics, we are a diverse nation, with about a quarter of our population identifying as visible minorities.

This act was designed to allow us to come together, to understand who we are and what our purpose is here. This act was designed to create a national identity. This act is designed to...

An Hon. Member: ...divide us.

Josh Tordiff: Is there another member that would like the floor? I want to leave on this question: who named Commonwealthland? Was it the people of Commonwealthland? Was it their elected representatives? No. This act was designed to create a space for the people of Commonwealthland to provide us with the knowledge of who we represent. It's not divisive. It's not fragmenting anybody. The only fragmentation that is happening right now is coming through this emotional response by somebody who did not, obviously, read the bill.



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Hon. Jordan Kerr: I rise to let the hon. member across the way there know that, thankfully, under our health policies, you're well-covered in our public health care system now. Our Health Minister is doing great things for public health, and I'm sure that you're going to be well looked after.

Parliament is a wonderful thing. It's where people can come together and they can introduce legislation that they are passionate about. It's a time where people can debate certain things, where they can get to know their fellow colleagues, get to know people from right around Commonwealthland.

This private member's bill is not something pursued by the government. It's not something pursued by the cabinet. It's being introduced by a member, and we're bringing it to the floor to debate it. This is what this is. This is a space for debate. This is a space for us to discuss this matter.

It's not something that we're supporting. It's not something that we're pushing. We're not driving a wedge between the people. We're here to create a place for discussion, a place where we can understand more about what it would mean to rename this place, what it would mean for the people, the 25 percent, that have an indigenous or cultural link to this land, what it would mean for the millions of people that would be benefited by a name change for this nation.

A private member's bill has been designed to bring to this floor for us to debate. It's been designed so we can discuss, learn more, understand exactly what Commonwealthland means and understand exactly what it would mean to change the name.

[1155]

As our colleagues over the way pointed out yesterday, people have a lot of power. Fortunately for us, we managed to capture that just recently. For this, we want to capture the power and the understanding of the people, understand what they want out of this nation.

As my learned friend over the way called, Commonwealthland was named by our founders. But our founders are no longer here. So why should we stick to the heritage that they have left, when we can proceed with progress, as our party states? The people have the power. The elected...

Interjections.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): Members.

Hon. Jordan Kerr: ...representatives have the power. This

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is a space for us to discuss this private member's bill, to discuss reforming our identity, to recognize progress and unify our nation.

Erin McAuley: Changing the name of the country does not put food on the table. It does not provide jobs. It does not provide employment or let people out of poverty. Policy and actions put food on the table, not changing the name of the country.

Jabari Lynch: I rise to reply to the act, the Commonwealthland Renaming Act. Personally, coming from a historical background, I believe that the hon. member, the private member in his capacity.... What he's attempting to achieve is honourable, is brave, in light of historical inaccuracies, historical tragedies that have occurred among people from different cultures clashing. But I believe that what will be more brave, more honourable, is to carry all of our energy into creating a more fair and just society for all.

As time moves on, I believe that the visible minorities and other individuals within the society will be more willing to have more food on their tables, to have the cost of housing being lowered, to have a better cost of living, than to simply have a change of the name. I believe that being wealthier, being prouder and more economically viable within the global village will be a greater healing than simply a name change.

It is brave, and it is honourable, but at this time it is a bit misguided. When these things are taken care of, when everyone can access better education, better health care, when individuals may be able to go into the economy to become businessmen and businesswomen and to move over the bureaucracy, when all in Commonwealthland can rise up and say that there is fair and equal treatment here — until that day comes, we must remain as Commonwealthland.

J. Lynch moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. Jordan Kerr moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament): This House, at its rising, stands adjourned until three o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:58 a.m.



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