

Most Gracious Speech To Both Houses of Parliament



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

ON WEDNESDAY, THIRTY-FIRST OF AUGUST, 2022

2022 THRONE SPEECH

*Transformative Development: Towards a
Sustainable, Equitable and Prosperous Grenada*

Delivered to the Houses of Parliament

By

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

**On the Occasion of the First Session of the
Eleventh Parliament**

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

August 31, 2022

10:00 A.M.

Introduction

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament.

The new Government of Grenada embarks on this First Session of the Eleventh Parliament at a time of renewed hope for the nation. Amidst the backdrop of a global pandemic and an uncertain economic future, the people of Grenada chose to take control of their destiny – opting for transformation and the aspiration of a better tomorrow.

This spirit of empowerment is the essence of what my Government intends to nurture as we seek to build, together, a just nation in which every individual has an equal opportunity to realise his or her full potential.

To achieve this, my Government's transformative vision directly addresses our nation's social and economic challenges. Transformation in the education and health sectors are crucial components in this process of change, as healthy minds and bodies are the foundation on which we must build to achieve sustainable growth and an improved quality of life for all citizens. Transformation to our national development model is also critical as my Government seeks to combat poverty, foster a sense of pride in our heritage and natural resources, and assume our rightful place among the community of nations.

Consistent with the foregoing, our theme for this new Session of Parliament is: *"Transformative Development: Towards a Sustainable, Equitable and Prosperous Grenada."*

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

My Government's programme to transform Grenada will provide a balanced and integrated approach to sustainable development, consistent with my Government's thrust for a sustainable, equitable and prosperous Grenada for all. This is aligned with "Vision 2035"

– Grenada, a resilient and prosperous nation, with a conscious and caring citizenry, promoting human dignity, and realising its full potential through sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress for all.”

To transform Grenada, my Government will focus on the holistic development of our people, ensuring that they are equipped and able to produce and deliver new and improved goods and services, utilising modern methods and techniques and generating new sources of employment and income. To this end, my Government will be driven by five overarching pillars:

1. Citizen Empowerment
2. Economic Transformation
3. Governance and Institutional Rebuilding
4. Environmental Management
5. Foreign Policy

Priorities for the first year are intended to be results-oriented, focusing on the implementation of strategic programmes, projects, and policies to gain the maximum benefits from the resources that are available. Rather than making wish lists and setting overly ambitious targets, my Government will focus instead on identifying priority areas for investment in different sectors. Through this approach, resources can be efficiently channelled to areas with the greatest need.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

My Government is keenly aware that there is tremendous work to be done in the areas of primary health care and access to quality health services.

Improving public health surveillance and data collection across the health system is a priority for my Government. Dialogue with development partners and key stakeholders has already begun, with the aim of determining the most effective approaches to upgrade the national health infrastructure, and fully implement the National Health Insurance Scheme.

My Government also recognises the need to promote healthy living standards and wellness, through food and nutrition security, meditation, and exercise. These are essential components to facilitate preventative lifestyle and behaviour practices, which foster positive social outcomes. Thus, there will be a strong policy focus on preventative, curative and rehabilitative health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting economic fallout, negatively affected the mental health of many, and heightened the risk for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. My Government is committed to combating the stigma of mental illness and intends to collaborate with stakeholders to create safe spaces, across the island, where afflicted persons may seek treatment and repose.

In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including St. George's University, my Government further intends to construct a new, modern public hospital with teaching facilities as the centrepiece of the development of the Education, Health, and the Wellness Sector.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

My Government believes that our human resources are our most precious asset and a fundamental contributor to the social and economic development of our nation. My Government recognises education as a basic right and will take the necessary steps to ensure free universal education up to the community college level.

My Government is dedicated to steering the course towards transforming this country from one of underdevelopment and deprivation to one where all citizens can improve their living standards and quality of life – through equal access to education, training, and employment opportunities. Key to this is the holistic development of our young people. My Government intends to expand the core curriculum around components that build life skills, encourage critical thinking and independent learning, and foster lifelong learning attitudes in our students, teachers, leaders, and community members.

My Government will prioritise education infrastructure; technological capacity; and education financing. These priority areas seek to strengthen systems that support blended learning modalities in schools and will include training for teachers and administrators.

Additionally, my Government will invest in vocational skills and training to address the disconnect between the skill sets offered in schools, the specific development needs of our country, and labour market trends. My Government is also committed to providing second chance opportunities to all youth who did not complete a primary, secondary, or tertiary education.

As it pertains to youth empowerment and deployment, my Government intends to re-imagine the IMANI program to provide more industry-ready training opportunities that will lead to sustainable employment. My Government is excited about the new and ambitious initiatives that are being developed, to be rolled out in the next few years.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The unemployment and poverty rates among citizens continue to be affected by volatile global events. My Government remains committed to cushioning the impact of external economic shocks on our people, especially the most vulnerable, as long as it is warranted.

At a more strategic level, my Government will take a comprehensive, coherent, and systematic approach to protecting and empowering the most vulnerable in our society. Accordingly, the pillars of our social services architecture will be substantially bolstered to focus not only on social protection, but also on empowering our most vulnerable.

My Government will retain the Support for Education Empowerment and Development (“SEED”) and other Social Safety Net Programmes. The scope and delivery of these core social

programmes will also be enhanced, and the inclusion of holistic and genuine community empowerment, particularly in rural communities, will be prioritised.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

It is important to note that Grenada has a youthful population, with over fifty percent (50%) of Grenadians aged 18 to 35. Youth will therefore play an integral part in national development, providing significant contributions to a growing labour force. In addition to core social programmes, my Government intends to invest in training and development opportunities for young people, fostering an environment where youth have access to the support and facilities needed, to break the cycle of unemployment and poverty.

My Government further recognises that land ownership plays a significant role in the development of generational wealth and intends to forge strategic partnerships to provide quality, affordable, climate-resilient Grenadian-styled family homes for our people. Special priority will be given to satisfying the housing demand for people in the lowest income bracket and youth.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

My Government is committed to building a solid foundation to grow a more vibrant, dynamic, inclusive, and resilient economy. In 2023, investments will be prioritised to enable transformative shifts in the traditional productive sectors, while simultaneously supporting the expansion of the new areas of economic growth. Particularly, emphasis will be placed on value addition and export sophistication of our agricultural and tourism products.

My Government's transformational agricultural policy will focus on food security by supporting local production and bolstering agro processing. This policy feeds into my Government's overarching goal to reduce Grenada's food import bill and nurture a society where citizens turn to local food sources. As such, a national

campaign that highlights the quality and benefits of locally grown produce will also be explored as my Government seeks to change the mindset surrounding imported food items.

Hence, my Government's thrust to do the following:

- Implement the Spice Replanting Programme and Plant-a-Tree Campaign
- Enhance the Mirabeau Agricultural School
- Restructure the Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB), to focus on Agricultural Support, Marketing and Procurement Services in collaboration with farmers and commodity boards
- Develop an Agro Processing Services Unit to provide advice, coordinate, and assist entrepreneurs in the development and packaging of their products.

Moreover, my Government recognises the need for appropriate pricing of essential public services, such as electricity, to increase the competitiveness of firms, and by extension Grenada's economic competitiveness.

My Government understands that small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and have the potential to allow our country to weather global economic shocks. Therefore, my Government will promote innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); socially owned enterprises, such as co-operatives; and village economies that are all critical for economic transformation, inclusive growth, and job creation.

Further, my Government will invest in the emerging sector of the Cannabis Industry. Cannabis will be legalised and a legal and regulatory framework for its production and sale will be created to commence and guide the development of the industry. Focus will be on the medical and industrial uses of the plant, to create employment, and generate foreign exchange.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The reopening of borders and our recent Spicemas celebrations have given a much-needed boost to our tourism sector. Although the effects of the pandemic can still be felt, plans are underway to develop a globally competitive tourism sector that will make a more substantial contribution to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), enhance employment opportunities, and build local capacity.

To this end, my Government intends to collaborate with partners in the tourism industry to establish and operate a first-class training institute that will improve the delivery of high-quality service in the tourism industry and provide on and off-island training for young Grenadians to be competitive in the sector.

Further, my Government will continue to work with all stakeholders, including the Grenada Tourism Authority, to bolster Grenada's presence in the established source markets and promote high-end stay-over visitors. The possibility of providing special incentives for development projects in rural communities will also be explored.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

Culture is the channel for expression of the rich and unique identity of a people and should instill in us all tremendous pride. My Government is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Grenadian culture and intends to reinforce local traditions through the creation of institutions dedicated to honouring our heritage.

My Government will also seek to trademark aspects of our culture that are uniquely Grenadian, with the aim of protecting our authentic and long-standing traditions and patrimony for future generations.

My Government is also committed to imbuing a new generation with an appreciation for traditions that are truly Grenadian, thereby fostering a sense of connection and continuity with our past. To

this end, cultural studies are currently being integrated into the education curriculum and an enhancement fund will be established to support the development of cultural products.

Pivotaly, my Government will establish a School for the Performing Arts and reintroduce the National Arts Festival, to encourage a spirit of healthy competition among our young artistes, while helping them to hone their talents in song, poetry, prose, drama, and dance.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The excellence of Grenadian sportsmen and women on the global stage has solidified the quality and discipline of our athletes and highlighted the ability of this industry to empower our young people, connect our communities and build our sense of national pride. The sporting industry also has the potential to be highly profitable, providing avenues to education, travel, and stable employment for our citizens.

My Government is fully committed to supporting the success of our athletes through the development of a Sports Tourism sector and the upgrade and implementation of the National Sports Policy to guide the planning, development, and administration of all sporting activities in Grenada. Strategic investments in state-of-the-art sporting facilities, training, and physiotherapy services, in addition to financial and educational assistance, will also serve to prepare our young sportsmen and women to play a vanguard role in the revolution in sports.

Further, my Government intends to implement a “Pay For Play” System, where national teams and sports personalities are paid a monthly stipend when on national training and representing Grenada.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

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

A strong Digital Economy supports my Government's overall strategy to address unemployment and provides avenues for citizens to earn foreign capital without leaving our shores. My Government recognises the global thrust towards remote employment, especially in the creative sector, and welcomes the global opportunities that are now available to Grenadians. My Government intends to actively seek out opportunities for further studies and training in areas such as coding, film, and multimedia, in addition to other digital and creative fields, to support the development of the creative economy. Improving data integrity, as well as strengthening and modernising data systems, are also a priority.

As my Government moves towards a paperless future, the understanding and use of ICT will be critical. Therefore, training in the use of computing technologies to conduct basic business will be made available to all citizens at the community level, to ensure that they are appropriately equipped to function in the new digital environment.

Additionally, my Government will work with our internet service providers to establish a network of Free Wireless Access Points in every community, school, government office, tourism site and recreational park.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

Public investments will prioritise the infrastructure development, rehabilitation, and maintenance needed to guarantee optimal use of our physical assets and ensure that our economy, society and environment benefit from quality, modern, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

My Government recognises that adequate and efficient infrastructure improves other sectors, such as healthcare and the environment. Accordingly, special emphasis will be placed on the systematic planning of projects in urban and rural areas, ensuring that they are supported by technical studies, including environmental impact assessments and cost benefit analyses.

My Government is firmly committed to increasing value for money in public procurement and prioritising productive and efficient spending to enhance the results-oriented Public Sector Investment Programme. Importantly, my Government is mindful that infrastructure costs are likely to remain high and will possibly increase in the context of rampant global inflation, and as such, active expenditure and contract management of infrastructure works will be prioritised.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

Our sister isles are endowed with rich natural and human resources, exhibit pristine beauty, and hold rich historical roots. Carriacou and Petite Martinique are our connection to the Grenadines and facilitate the ease of inter-island travel. Thus, my Government remains committed to pursuing efficient, reliable, and cost-effective transportation services; that is, airlift, including night landing, and the daily operations of the Osprey ferry.

Moreover, my Government will implement a Local Government Authority in Carriacou and Petite Martinique and prioritise infrastructure development and an equal provision of resources for social, economic, and human development, with an aim for increased efficiencies and its economic stability.

The small size of Carriacou and Petite Martinique make the islands uniquely positioned to serve as transformation hubs, allowing for pilot programme testing in the areas of renewable energy and aspects of the blue economy – fishing and marine industries.

The blue economy holds tremendous potential to broaden, diversify and generate sustainable economic growth for Grenada. My Government views the fisheries and marine sector as a viable livelihood for many citizens and intends to position our country as a processing centre for fish exports destined to key international markets. Also, in support of expansive economic growth, my Government will explore potential sectors including aquaculture, waste disposal, marine biotechnology, ocean renewable energy, coral farming, sustainable fisheries, bioprospecting, and marine eco-tourism, among others.

Notwithstanding, my Government is aware that the exploitation of coastal and marine resources must be done in a responsible manner to preserve the vitally important resources provided by these ecosystems. Consequently, my Government will establish a mechanism where marine resources are monitored to ensure the natural regeneration of aquatic life in areas where such life has been depleted.

Accordingly, my Government will develop and implement a National Fishing Support Program for local Fishermen aimed at providing better training in modern sustainable fishing techniques.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

Climate adaptation and mitigation are crucial priorities for my Government. Our land, coastal and marine areas are finite resources which need not only protection, but preservation. My Government will increase emphasis on policies and activities that will lead to the protection of our environment, in particular the health of our coastal waters, the conservation of critical ecosystems for wildlife, and the quality and sustainability of our water supply.

My Government will promote a national culture that appreciates the need to maintain balance between human needs and environmental sustainability. In support of this, my Government intends to implement a reforestation program throughout Grenada and encourage the creation of green spaces.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

Dependence on traditional energy sources, like crude oil, places Grenada in a vulnerable position given the direct correlation to increase in electricity prices, food costs, and other gas and energy related products. My Government will invest in alternative and renewable energy and create avenues for the use of solar, geothermal, wind and hydro energy, targeted at lowering the cost of energy to consumers.

My Government will create legislation that allows citizens to implement alternative energy sources/products in their businesses and homes. To ensure viability, my Government intends to incentivise individuals and businesses that undertake and fully implement this venture.

My Government, with support from the World Bank, will launch a major energy efficiency project in public buildings, which will not only reduce Grenada's carbon footprint but result in significant savings in electricity costs.

Furthermore, my Government is currently working with the World Bank in the area of climate change budget tagging, with the strategic objective of categorising, measuring, and monitoring climate-relevant public expenditure, to better identify and mobilise fiscal resources toward climate resilience building.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

My Government is committed to pursuing a foreign policy that is anchored in democratic principles and good governance. My Government values the mutually beneficial relationships Grenada maintains with bilateral and multilateral partners and intends to continue these engagements in support of the implementation of our developmental priorities. My Government will also seek to forge new international relationships that align with its national transformation agenda.

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

My Government acknowledges the significant achievements towards regional integration in the Caribbean and welcomes these advancements. My Government supports a coordinated regional foreign policy approach to engage the rest of the world and pledges to continue Grenada's commitment to the integration process by supporting regional institutions, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS); the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), all of which seek the betterment of our peoples.

My Government further recognises the key role that the Grenadian Diaspora plays in representing Grenada's culture and talent in countries around the globe and intends to harness the input and contribution of this community, to build foreign partnerships and support local industry.

My Government is committed to the inclusion of all Grenadians in the process of national development, regardless of political affiliation. Engagements to encourage increased input and expertise from this community has already begun. A call for Grenadians to serve on local Boards was met with overwhelming support, receiving over 1,600 applications, comprising persons in Grenada and from the Diaspora, some of whom have already been selected and appointed to serve on the Boards.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The promotion of good governance, accountability and citizens' genuine and active participation in the governance and development process are key priorities for my Government. In

this regard, specific focus will be given to strengthening public sector governance through coherent and systematic modernisation and reforms that are aimed at increasing citizens' confidence in the public sector – which in turn can contribute to enhancing its effectiveness and image, while promoting accountability.

My Government intends to lead by example and will honour the Constitution and the ruling of the High Court on the payment of pensions to citizens. Plans to this end are already in motion and the first payments are expected to begin in November, 2022. Pension reform will also be a key part of my Government's plan to ensure a fiscally sound pension and social security system for public workers. My Government has also prioritised and honoured its commitment to repay \$1.2 Million in docked salaries to teachers and other public officers. In addition, my Government has begun the process to regularise the status of unestablished and contract workers operating within the Public Service.

Transformation through self-reliance and the creation of wealth is the cornerstone of my Government's plan to build a sustainable, prosperous society for the benefit of all. Consequently, my Government intends to undertake a review of the Minimum Wage Order through a collaborative review of wages with the private and public sectors, with a view to increase the minimum wage.

Additionally, to address cash flow challenges, and to increase the volume of business transactions in the economy, my Government is operationalising its plan to pay public servants twice per month within the first quarter of 2023. This will be done in collaboration with the private sector to have this practice standardised throughout the country and my Government is happy to indicate that some private sector businesses have already begun to pay their employees twice per month.

Further, my Government is cognisant of the fact that the implementation of public projects, programmes and policies has differential impacts on women and men that must be considered. Importantly, therefore, gender mainstreaming will be applied across all priority programmes, policies, and projects to reduce gender disparities in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP).

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

At present, the economy is facing an unprecedented level of uncertainty. Lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, new public health concerns such as the Monkeypox virus, Russia's war in Ukraine, high and rising global inflation, global supply chain challenges, geo-political strains, and tighter financial market conditions, pose the greatest risks to the global economy, and by extension, Grenada's macroeconomic and fiscal outlook.

Based on data collected for the first six months of this year, our economy is expected to register positive growth for 2022 and 2023, though the projection for 2023 is for weak growth given the global economic outlook. Total public debt at the end of June 2022 stood at 2.1 billion dollars or 66.2 percent of GDP, and the full year estimate is 67.6 percent of GDP.

Cognisant of the existing economic realities, my Government will pursue a path of prudent fiscal management to preserve credibility and safeguard medium-term fiscal and debt sustainability, while cushioning the impact of a harsh macroeconomic environment on citizens, especially the most vulnerable.

The fiscal position of my Government is projected to improve in 2023 and over the medium term. The underlying objective of my Government's medium-term fiscal strategy is to support its transformational agenda, while simultaneously safeguarding fiscal credibility and sustainability.

The fiscal forecasts are subject to review and revision prior to the Budget presentation later in the year, given the prevailing and potentially grave macroeconomic uncertainties.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The legislative agenda for the upcoming period will be driven by my Government's focus – ***Transformative Development: Towards a Sustainable, Equitable and Prosperous Grenada.***

The proposed legislative agenda will cover the following areas, among others:

- Digital Transformation
- Natural Resource Preservation
- Renewable Energy
- Urban Planning
- Labour Relations

Madame President, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Grenada have chosen *transformation* and my Government is fully committed to delivering on its mandate. This is an exciting time for our nation; one that is filled with palpable hope and the promise of a brighter future. True and lasting success can only be achieved with the support and action of all citizens, both at home and in the Diaspora. Let us embody the words of our national anthem and “advance as one people” as we collectively seek to uplift Grenada. The time is *now*.

In this context, my Government reaffirms its major focus for this session of Parliament as: ***Transformative Development: Towards a Sustainable, Equitable and Prosperous Grenada.***

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament.

As we embark on this journey towards self-actualisation as a nation, I close with a quote from Martin Luther King Jr.:

“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there “is” such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

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

Thank you and may God continue to bless us all.

