



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.04 p.m. – 4.17 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 20th March 2025

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Procedural 27
Adjournment 27
The House adjourned at 4.17 p.m. 27

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.04 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Judge K Ramagge GMH *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

CHIEF MINISTER

Q401/2025

Child grooming case –

Issues relating to the professional conduct of a teacher in 2019

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 20th of March, 2025. Answers oral questions continued. Questions to the Hon. the Chief Minister.

5 Question 401, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, why was the report in respect of the child grooming case that was delivered to Government in 2022 by Gillian Guzman KC, and which involved issues relating to the professional conduct of a teacher in 2019, never made public?

10 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the Government has previously made clear that the report on the 2019 child grooming case was not published due to legal and safeguarding concerns. The case involved a vulnerable minor and a serious breach of trust. And as such, the Government felt it was imperative to protect the victim's identity and privacy.

15 I would have thought that the hon. Members opposite would have come to the same conclusion. Additionally, in response to public calls for disclosure, the Government has consistently said that the report contains highly sensitive information and has advised that the publication of such report is not appropriate. Nonetheless, action was taken. The teacher was permanently removed from Gibraltar's education system and safeguarding policies were strengthened to prevent such failures in the future.

25 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, we understand that there will be aspects of the report that would be highly sensitive and so on. So to the extent that the report made recommendations that were not subject sensitive in terms of an individual, but were broader in nature, did the Government consider whether it was possible to produce some kind of redacted form of recommendations that could have been perhaps put in the public

30 domain? And if not, but it did lead to the review of the safeguarding policies, can the Chief
Minister give us a bit more detail on how the safeguarding policies were improved as a
result of recommendations made in that report?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, can I start my non-prepared interventions today by
35 welcoming Phillip Borge to the House, who is my team's loss given that you managed to
poach him from No. 6 Convent Place and from the Parliament team to the spot here as
Clerk. My loss, Madam Speaker, is Parliament's gain. Second, Madam Speaker, can I ask
the hon. Gentleman to reflect whether he wants to declare an interest in this matter?

40 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member is, the Hon. Chief Minister
must be referring to the fact that I believe that a partner in my firm acts for the family. As
the hon. Member knows, this is not my question. I am taking this question on behalf of
my colleague, Mrs Ladislaus, who isn't in the Chamber today, and I'm asking a
supplementary on that basis.

45 Yes, he is right to remind me that that is the case. I would not be putting this
question had it not been that I was reading out her question.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And then in the context of the first
answer to the first of the two supplementaries that the hon. Gentleman asked in one,
50 although I understand your guidance is that we should ask one supplementary at a time,
the Government did consider the possibility, because we were asked to by his firm to
publish a redacted version of the report. That was not considered something that would
avoid the issues that concerned us about publishing an unredacted version of the report
because we have to understand, Madam Speaker, Gibraltar is Gibraltar, and redaction
55 may not prevent the ability of people to be fully identified.

In answer to the second of the supplementaries that he posed, Madam Speaker,
the issues which arose were not structural issues in the main. There was one concern
about an inability to have information move from a private school to a state-owned school
and from teachers in the private schooling sector to the Department of Education, which
60 we think has been dealt with in a way that should ensure it doesn't happen again.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q402/2025
Former Chief Secretary –
Educational projects or initiatives

65 **Clerk:** Question 402, the Hon. E.J. Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of what educational projects or initiatives
the former Chief Secretary is currently working upon?

70 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the former Chief Secretary is not
currently working on any educational projects or initiatives.

75 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I pose my question asking what educational projects or initiatives because, I hope I haven't recalled wrongly the Chief Minister in Parliament did say that the former Chief Secretary was moving on to do other tasks for Government, which included some work connected with educational projects. I think he was talking about the big overall picture of updating or collating together details and information that
80 the education authorities have already got.

So, if it is nothing at all to do with educational projects, is it fair for me to ask the Chief Minister what is then the former Chief Secretary currently engaged doing, given that we have been led to believe he had some tasks to do that were educationally related?

85 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, this is not a political matter, it is an administrative matter. I understand that Mr Grech has expressed the desire to now completely leave the Service, so he is in the process of doing that and finishing off whatever it was that he was doing. Of course, he was my Chief Secretary for many years, so I wish him very well indeed and I thank him for the service that he gave Gibraltar.

90 The contribution that he is made to educational initiatives, I understand, is still ongoing. It is not something that he does under my purview.

Madam Speaker: Next Question.

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Q403/2025
The Economy –
Revenue per sector

Clerk: Question 403, the Hon. C Sacarello.

100 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Could the Government please provide a breakdown of the revenue per sector of the economy for the last 12 months?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Chief Minister.

105 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I have already told hon. Members in response to other very similar questions, now that we are in the final quarter of the year, indeed in the final few days of the final quarter of the financial year, the Government will wait until the end of the quarter to provide figures in order to ensure that they are as reliable as possible. These figures, in any event, are traditionally provided at the time of the budget debate.

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Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, that is much appreciated. Would the Hon. Chief Minister be able to identify which sectors at least have been identified as the strong growth potential and what has been done to foster further growth in these key areas?

115 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker, the Government has identified a number of areas. We have been talking about them now for a number of years. We have set out our economic policy and successive budget statements in respect of how we will foster growth in respect of each of those areas.

I commend those statements to the hon. Gentleman.

120 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, in the absence of any information being
provided directly to this question, I will move on to the next one, which is, what does the
Chief Minister see as a prognosis for the business community in the event of an agreement
and the increase in threats from, is this hypothetical, what is being done to alleviate the
125 fears of the business community that in the event of an agreement they would be open
to not just greater competition but also a different tax regime?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not accept that I have not given any
information in respect of the hon. Gentleman's first supplementary. I have actually
directed him to where the information in detail is already provided and I believe that the
130 hon. Gentleman's second supplementary, the one he is posed now, is predating, or sorry,
is about a matter which is next on the Order Paper on his next question.

Q404/2025

**Business community tax and safety –
Negatively impacted**

135 **Clerk:** Question 404, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Following representations that we have received from the business
community that two of the attractions of doing business in Gibraltar, namely tax and
140 safety, will likely be significantly and negatively impacted on, can the Government explain
what it is planning to do to mitigate these issues in the event of a deal?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

145 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Well Madam Speaker, I genuinely do not know what
the hon. Member is referring to when he refers to safety being one of the two attractions
of doing business in Gibraltar. Does the hon. Member refer to security, the public security
context, or to the security offered by our regulatory and other public institutions? In any
event, let me assure the hon. Member that nothing that we might agree to with the
150 European Union will lead to the erosion of any concept of safety in Gibraltar in any context
whatsoever.

Insofar as the hon. Member might refer generally to tax, I similarly do not know
precisely what it is that the hon. Member is referring to. I can assure the hon. Gentleman,
however, that there is no question of Gibraltar's tax rates being in play. The hon. Member
155 then mentions mitigation.

Agreeing a treaty would not, as I see it, lead to an exercise in mitigating against
loss in any of the areas that he refers to, or indeed at all. It would, however, potentially
lead to an exercise in adapting in order to capitalise on the opportunities that a treaty
could bring. For obvious reasons, Madam Speaker, that is all I will be drawn into saying at
160 this point.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, that is understood. I do understand
the sensitivities of the negotiations.

165 Having said that, the business community does view these things in a different way
to which the Chief Minister described. Whilst there are opportunities, there are certainly
threats there which are live and real, as has been indicated by the Chief Minister himself.
I will move on to safety.

170 Yes, the question was guided more towards the security, as the Chief Minister
pointed out, into the increased levels of crime. There is a general concern amongst the
community, a wider concern, about safety. My question is, what security or safety
measures are being taken or are being planned to be put in place in the event of an
agreement to ensure that our border, as we know it now, is not more porous and open to
crime entering and exiting Gibraltar?

175 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I do not accept that the business community
feels otherwise. I am talking to the business community. He might be talking to some
people in the business community, but they are giving him their view based on what their
business may be or their misunderstanding of what it is that the Government is saying.

180 But the business representative organisations that we talk to have many
businesses that fear that we might not do a treaty, because if we do not, their business
model might be the one that is under threat. So this is a picture which has a myriad of
different concerns from a myriad of different sectors. The Government is engaged with
all of those sectors.

185 It requires on the part of the Government a balancing act between all of those
different areas to reach the right balance. We believe we will reach the right balance. And
Madam Speaker, we do not for one moment believe that there is the slightest chance that
Gibraltar will become more porous than it is today to potential criminal actors or that
indeed anything that we might agree would make Gibraltar less safe.

190 We think everything we might agree and anything that we might do in
consequence of what we might agree will actually make Gibraltar safer.

Hon. C Sacarello: Well Madam Speaker, I am extremely glad to hear that and the Chief
Minister speaking confidently on that matter is exactly what the public would like to hear.
But perhaps the Hon. Chief Minister, would like to use this opportunity to reassure the
195 general public how and what measures would ensure that their security is maintained as
it is, as they know it nowadays.

Hon. Chief Minister: No Madam Speaker.

200 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q405/2025
Companies House Gibraltar –
Guidance on sensitive words and expressions

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Q406/2025
GAR Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q407/2025
GSBA Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q408-9/2025
GSTR Ltd –
Residential properties acquired in Clemence Suites; Car parking spaces acquired in Ocean Spa Plaza

Q410/2025
GSF Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q411/2025
Government, GDC and GSB owned companies –
Off plan purchases of residential property

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Clerk: Question 405, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government provide the information given to Companies House Gibraltar as required by guidance in notes 4 on sensitive words and expressions issued by Companies House Gibraltar as to what the particular letters or abbreviation in the names of the following Government owned, Gibraltar Development Corporation owned and Savings Bank owned companies stand for, namely GDC and GDC Directors Limited; GCP and GCP Investments Limited; ES and ES Limited; GAR and GAR Limited; GRP and GRP Management Company Limited; GSBA and GSBA Limited; GOC and GOC Secretaries Limited; GEP and GEP Limited; GSTR and GSTR Limited; GUT and GUT Limited; GSF and GSF Limited, KIJY and KIJY Parking Limited.

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I will answer with 406 to 411.

Clerk: Question 406, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise what properties does GAR Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 407, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise what properties does GSBA Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 408, the Hon. R M Clinton.

240 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing the residential properties GSTR Limited acquired in Clemence Suites and their associated purchase price and date of purchase?

Clerk: Question 409, the Hon. R M Clinton.

245 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing the car parking spaces GSTR Limited acquired in Ocean Spa Plaza and their associated purchase price and date of purchase?

Clerk: Question 410, the Hon. R M Clinton.

250 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise what properties does GSF Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 411, the Hon. R M Clinton.

255 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing all off plan purchases of residential property (excluding 50:50 schemes) by the Government, any Government owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation owned company or Gibraltar Savings Bank owned company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025?

260 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the company names listed in Companies House, Gibraltar are the names of the companies and do not represent abbreviations. They are nonetheless acronyms which helpfully identify activity as follows:

265 GDC and GDC Directors Limited stands for Gibraltar Development Corporation. GCP and GCP Investments Limited does apparently not stand for anything, ES and ES Limited was originally Europa Stadium Limited but is now used for energy supplies, GAR and GAR Limited stands for Gibraltar Asset Rentals, GRP and GRP Management Company Limited stands for Gibraltar Residential Properties. GSBA and GSBA Limited stands for
270 Gibraltar Savings Bank Assets, GOC and GOC Secretaries Limited stands for Government Owned Companies, GEP and GEP Limited stands for Gibraltar Education Projects, GSTR and GSTR Limited stands for Gibraltar Short Term Rentals, GUT and GUT Limited stands for Gibraltar Underpass Tunnel, GSF and GSF Limited stands for Gibraltar Sports Facilities and KIJY and KIJY Parkings does not stand for anything.

275 GSTR Limited acquired 125 parking spaces in Ocean Spa Plaza on 11 February 2020 for £1,250,000. The parking spaces are managed by Gibraltar Car Parks Limited. I should have said GCPL! There are currently 123 parking spaces rented out at £100 per month. This is collected by GCPL.

280 Madam Speaker, in respect of Questions 406 to 408, 410 and 411, the information requested is in the schedule that I now hand over. Madam Speaker, GAR owns and manages the following properties. There is a table which I think I have given the hon. Gentleman in 407 and 408.

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Madam Speaker, the answer to 411 is that the only off-plan residential property is purchased by the Government, any Government-owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation-owned company or Gibraltar Savings Bank-owned company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025 is via GSTR Limited as set out in the answer to Question 408.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 411

ANSWER TO QUESTION 406

GAR Limited owns and manages the following properties:

Property	Address	Cost
Ex- St Bernard's Hospital	21 Hospital Ramp now St Bernard's School	£18,857,393
Law Courts	32-36 Town Range	£15,774,389
HM Prison	Alectoris Lane, 1	£11,960,710
Government Offices	6 Convent Place	£11,134,502
The Mount	Europa Road 15	£8,501,109
Police Headquarters	Rosia Road, 31	£6,665,377
Queen's Hotel	Boyd Street, 1-3	£5,500,000
Queens Cinema	Boyd Street, 11-13	£4,179,745
Joshua Hassan House – Offices	Secretary's Lane, 2 -8	£3,500,000
General Post Office	Main Street, 104 & Irish Town, 69-71	£2,649,905
Old Airport Terminal Plot	Winston Churchill Avenue, 9	£2,037,241
Offices – Duke of Kent House	Cathedral Square, 11	£2,023,413
Customs' Offices	Winston Churchill Avenue, 2	£1,602,530
Offices – Ombudsman	Governor's Lane, 10	£1,553,848
Office – Port department	North Mole Road, 6	£1,151,890
Ex-Chronicle Building	Library Street, 2	£1,100,000
Offices & Store – Nelsons Anchorage	Rosia Road, 32B	£632,185
9 & 10 Park View House	Queensway, 21	£271,916
Offices – Stores & Mess Room	Cemetery Road, 19	£119,980

Costs include purchase price and related costs

ANSWER TO QUESTION 407

GSBA Limited owns and manages the following properties:

Property	Address	Cost
Gibraltar International Bank	310 Main Street	£5,756,140
Treasury Building / GSB	206/210 Main Street	£4,862,669
Flat	49 Ragged Staff Wharf, Queensway Quay	£1,091,789
Ex-North District Post Office	Unit A, George Jeger House, Glacis Estate	£55,352
Ex-South District Post Office	22 Scud Hill	£31,313

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ANSWER TO QUESTION 408

The following schedule details the residential properties GSTR Limited acquired in Clemence Suites and their associated purchase price and date of purchase.

No. Bedrooms	Apartment name	Purchase Price Paid	Date of purchase	Date of Sale	Sale Price	Profit on Sales
2	AMETHYST	£356,720	Aug-19	Mar-23	£565,000	£208,280.00
2	RUBY	£356,720	Aug-19			
1	MOONSTONE	£233,240	Aug-19	Nov-23	£355,000	£121,760.00
2	SAPPHIRE	£359,660	Aug-19	Feb-25	£540,000	£180,340.00
2	AMETHYST	£359,660	Aug-19	Feb-24	£580,000	£220,340.00
2	JASPER	£359,660	Aug-19			
2	RUBY	£359,660	Aug-19			
1	MOONSTONE	£233,240	Aug-19	Nov-23	£355,000	£121,760.00
1	ZIRCON	£233,240	Aug-19	Apr-23	£395,000	£161,760.00
		£2,851,800			£2,790,000	£1,014,240.00

295 **Madam Speaker:** I will give the hon. Member some time to look at the schedules and we will revert to supplementaries. Next question.

Clerk: Question 412, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

300 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Before the House continues, Madam Speaker, I think that we have not put in the schedule the answer to 410. The answer to 410 is as follows. GSF Limited owns the Lathbury Sports Complex at 3 Buffadero Lane. The complex is managed by the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority on behalf of GSF Limited.

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**Q412-14/2025
Gibraltarian Status Act –
Applications for Gibraltarian status submitted and refused over the last 10 years**

Clerk: Question 412, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

310 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, how many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 5 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been submitted and refused over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, we will answer 413 and 414.

315 **Clerk:** Question 413, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been refused over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year in respect of an applicant born in Gibraltar?

320 **Clerk:** Question 414, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year?

325 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

330 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the number of applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 5 of the Gibraltarian Status Act which have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year is as follows.

Year	Applications Submitted
2015	670
2016	570
2017	497
2018	448
2019	393
2020	219
2021	487
2022	592
2023	302
2024	362
2025	89

335 Madam Speaker, of those, no applications have been refused. Madam Speaker, in respect of Question 413, one was refused in 2004. The number of applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act which have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year is as follows.

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Year	Applications Submitted
2015	163
2016	117
2017	97
2018	84
2019	77
2020	64
2021	136
2022	199
2023	105
2024	110
2025	7

Applications often require several months to process due to the various robust checks undertaken by the team at CSRO.

345 Consequently, an application submitted towards the end of one year may not receive a decision until the beginning of the following year.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, given that those numbers were rattled off, I will wait for the printed version of the answer and then consider for further meetings of the House. But can I just ask, in relation to 412, the numbers that the Hon. Chief Minister gave, he said, I think, at the tail end of that answer that none had been refused. So those numbers, if that was right, so the numbers he gave were submitted and granted no refusals. Is that correct?

355 **Hon. Chief Minister:** That is what I said, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: That is what I thought I had heard. But given the very last thing that he said, which is that some applications are considered over a long period of time and it may be that it is submitted one year and granted another. So, to the extent that I have asked for applications that have been submitted and granted or submitted and refused, as it were, on this occasion, because on previous times I have asked about submitted and granted.

360 So, is he saying that, to the extent that I have had a schedule that says submitted and granted, that it may not be talking about the same things? In other words, there could be a number given for submissions of a particular year and the column in which I have been given a number that is either granted or refused may not correlate to the particular column of submissions. Is that what he is saying?

Hon. Chief Minister: That would appear to be correct, Madam Speaker.

370 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q415/2025
Eastern Beach –
Alleged incident involving a Spanish state vessel

375 **Clerk:** Question 415, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, will the Government update the House on information it has concerning the alleged incident near Eastern Beach on Sunday 10 November 2024 involving a Spanish state vessel and the number of ribs and where the shots were fired?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

385 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I previously stated, this was part of an ongoing investigation. It would, therefore, not be appropriate for me to comment at this stage.

390 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, indeed, that was the principal answer last time, but
the Chief Minister will recall, he also indicated to me, that if I asked the question, perhaps
in the future, in a couple of months, that he might be able to give us more information. I
have waited, I think, about four or five months to ask the question again. Is it that he is
got no new information or that he is got new information but the investigation has not
reached the point where he is able to speak about it across the floor of the House?

395 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I have not been given any more information.
I do not seek this information, other than when the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition,
asks me to seek the information. I hear comments all the time about how governments
must not interfere with investigations and, therefore, I am surprised that I am being asked
400 to seek information about an ongoing investigation.

Once the investigation is not ongoing any longer, Madam Speaker, one would
expect the police would make a statement.

405 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am not going to get side tracked into the
irrelevant comments of the Chief Minister, but when he says he does not ask about this,
but he does when I put the question. So, when he put the question, was he given an
update or was he simply told the investigation is still going on and we are not ready?

410 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I do not consider anything that I have said is
irrelevant. In fact, it is highly apposite, given some of the commentary I see from the
Leader of the Opposition in some other regards. Madam Speaker, as I have said, when a
parliamentary question is filed, the parliamentary teams seek the information. If no more
information has been provided, it's because no more information is available to be
provided or it would be inappropriate to provide it.

415 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

420

Q416-19/2025

Scholarship awards –

Policy; New discretionary criteria; Eligibility rule, Gibraltar Tax Payers

Clerk: Question 416, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

425 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Who has the Minister for Education met or reached out to when explaining the Government's new policy on scholarship awards to private schools?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

430 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer with 417 to 419.

Clerk: Question 417, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

435 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, when will the Government announce the new discretionary criteria for scholarship awards?

Clerk: Question 418, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

440 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Why is the Government discriminating between resident children of resident taxpayers in drawing up eligibility rules on mandatory scholarships?

Clerk: Question 419, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

445 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Why should children of resident Gibraltar taxpayers not be entitled to mandatory scholarships like other children of resident Gibraltar taxpayers, irrespective of the school they attend?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

450 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, after filing his questions, the hon. Member and other Members of the Opposition have been making public comments and issuing statements in respect of both this issue and their other questions. I am sure that Speaker's rulings about such comments, once a question is filed, are meant to apply to all Members and not just to Members of the Government's side. After all, Madam Speaker, we are all Members here.

455 In their public statements, the Opposition and Mr Azopardi in particular have, as ever, taken it upon themselves to distort reality and create unnecessary concern about the Government's mandatory scholarship scheme, a policy, I must add, introduced by the Father of the House in the first GSLP administration and a policy which this Government is immensely proud of also I should add, Madam Speaker, that it was a policy that was
460 strongly opposed when the Father of the House started to propose it. Madam Speaker, the Minister for Education has met with representatives of the Board and Management of Prior Park and both Hebrew high schools, and has engaged via email and conversation with a number of parents and students.

465 This is not a secret policy change, nor is it one designed to unfairly impact students in any sector of education. The Opposition's latest attempt to generate controversy over

this matter is just another example of their deliberate efforts to create confusion where none should exist. They are acting, Madam Speaker, in my view, as a flamethrower that spreads jet fuel and fire in an attempt to make politics on the shoulders of students.

They should be ashamed of themselves, but I am sure they are not, because they
470 have no shame, Madam Speaker. Government's intention has always been to ensure fairness in the allocation of taxpayers' money and to prevent abuse of the system. This is not a new principle. It was clearly set out by me in my New Year's message.

The issue at hand is not about targeting students in private education. It is about
475 ensuring that taxpayer-funded scholarships are only awarded to those who are genuinely entitled to them.

Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the Leader of the Opposition's questions asking
the Government when it intends to announce the new discretionary criteria for
scholarship awards. I am surprised, Madam Speaker, because the Government is not
480 reviewing the criteria for discretionary scholarships. What we have said we are reviewing is the criteria for mandatory scholarships.

The Opposition claims that the Government is discriminating against certain students. This could not be further from the truth. Perhaps they are just guided by what they read, some sloppy blogs, without bothering to carefully analyse.

The revised criteria apply across the board and are aimed at ensuring that
485 scholarships are available to those who have a genuine and long-standing connection to Gibraltar. The GSD's continued attempts to falsely suggest that we are targeting private schools are nothing short of reckless scaremongering. An attempt by them to start a 21st Century class war with the sole purpose of gaining the votes they lost because of the Leader of the Opposition's disastrous management of the last General Election campaign.

490 Additionally, Madam Speaker, the notion that children of resident Gibraltar taxpayers are being denied access to scholarships is completely false. What we are doing is introducing necessary safeguards to ensure that only those who meet the eligibility criteria benefit from taxpayer-funded scholarships, whatever school they go to, or none. The Government remains committed to ensuring that every Gibraltar student who is
495 genuinely entitled to a scholarship, receives one. We are also equally as committed to ensure that those who have come to Gibraltar to abuse our system and to claim benefits from the state to which they are not contributing and should not be entitled, do not get one.

The question the public should be asking is why hon. Members opposite appear
500 so desperate to protect the loopholes that have enabled some individuals to take advantage of our scholarship system. Do they believe that Gibraltar's taxpayers should fund scholarships for those with little or no substantive connection to our community? Because that is the logical conclusion of their arguments.

The simple fact is that the GSLP and the GSLP Liberal Government have always
505 supported education, tertiary education, and we introduced and then enhanced all access to scholarships for Undergraduates and then Master's Degree, and we continue to do so. What we will not do is allow our fair, well-intended, and necessary policies to be misrepresented by an opposition that is more interested in sowing discord on everything rather than engaging in a constructive debate on anything.

510 The real disservice to students and to parents is not the policy change itself, which is designed to protect the system, but the Opposition's deliberate and irresponsible attempts to stir anxiety for political gain. The Government will continue to support

students fairly and equitably, and will ensure that Gibraltar's scholarship system is sustainable for generations to come.

515

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, what a monument of a castle-in-the-air argument that was. I mean, if there was any sowing of anxiety among students, it was when students were invited to a presentation and then summarily excluded by the Government that he represents, that he's supposed to be so concerned about students. It is not the Opposition that is causing anxiety. It was the bungling efforts of the Government in presenting its policy change to students that did that all by itself. If there's any controversy, it is a self-created controversy.

520

Madam Speaker, we have made comment, yes, last week, after we filed the questions. But the questions were filed after this story broke and became controversial through their self-created wound. He gave an interview on GBC, and so did I. We were reacting in the public interest, which is justifiable cause for commenting in public. Or is that not the case? But can I ask him this? Because somehow he's turned it all on the Opposition. Somehow he's turned it all on the Opposition when it's a self-created wound through their bungling.

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Let me remind him because the Education Department produce, as they always do, an information handbook for students. In 2024, it said, in its criteria, that it required applicants to be attending a school in Gibraltar. In 2025, the same handbook with the same criteria was issued to students and parents and students were invited to a presentation.

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Lo and behold, days before, a new version of the 2025 handbook is produced with a line that excludes certain schools in Gibraltar. Does he not accept that it was that bungling effort at miscommunication that raised anxiety among students and parents in Gibraltar? Why won't he accept that responsibility once and for all, rather than always turning it to the Opposition, as if it's our fault? We did not invent the policy that he created. We did not change the line. It was his Government. Take responsibility.

540

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, he could not once again be more wrong about every aspect of the comment that he has made. And the two questions that he has asked, unless I interpret the first one as being rhetorical. Let me start, Madam Speaker, with the issue of comment outside this House.

545

I am not complaining about the fact that the hon. Gentleman gave an interview. I might complain about the content of it, because it was frankly designed to pour napalm on the issue, literally pouring jet fuel on the skin of students to try and get things going, as I said in my response. All of that, Madam Speaker, was before the notice for questions had gone out, or at least before the notice for questions had been completed.

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The issue is, Madam Speaker, once a question has been filed, we're asked not to comment. And the hon. Gentleman goes on social media and comments with copies of his questions. Look, to say that he is going to ask his question is not to comment, but to give comment on his questions is to comment.

555

Then today in the Gibraltar Chronicle, I read an article by an Opposition member that is dealing with exactly these issues. So on the issue of commenting after the notice of questions, Madam Speaker, I think that the Government is very clear that the rule should apply to all of us and not just to some of us. In particular, when it is Members opposite that often seek to try and remind the Government of these issues.

560 Frankly, Madam Speaker, the Government does not recognise any of what the
hon. Gentleman has said as being the issues. He may be trying to litigate it in that way,
because as the apparent spokesperson of private schools in Gibraltar these days, which
he is trying to set himself up to be, he seems to want to only concentrate on those issues.
I was at Westside and Bayside yesterday for the Liberal Studies talk.

565 One of the most challenging things any senior politician in Gibraltar ever does,
which is to stand before Gibraltar's brilliant young minds. We get better questions from
them than we get from the international media. And I was asked there about the issue of
scholarships, and I made clear there, in the state schools, in the comprehensives, that
even those who are in the comprehensives need to ensure that they comply with the
570 eligibility criteria.

We have the information on all of those students. We don't have all of the
information on all of the students in the private schools. That is the issue.

Constantly the debate is that hon. Members opposite have set themselves up for
the past 14 years as being the guardians of waste and corruption against the public purse.
575 And yet, when the Government takes the slightest step to try and stop that potential
corruption of the eligibility criteria, what do we face? That the hon. Members opposite
become the guardians of there being no eligibility filter, and that things must just continue
as they are, and how dare we cause a concern for a student.

No A-level student in Gibraltar needs to have any concern whatsoever. Not just
580 those in the three private schools. Not those just in the comprehensive schools.

Also those who seem to be forgotten, Madam Speaker, perhaps because there is
not enough of them for the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to care about the quantum of
their votes. Those who are not in school, who are educated at home. So that is why I say
in private schools, in state schools, or in no schools, none of them need to have any
585 concern whatsoever.

The only issue is if your parents have not been contributing in the way that they
should have been contributing for you to be able to fulfil the eligibility criteria. The
eligibility criteria is going to be tightened. There may be an element of grandfathering of
that, or there may not be an element of grandfathering of that.

590 When that is announced, and we are working on that in detail, people will be able
to see whether they come within it. None of the people who appear to have any concerns
should have any concerns. But why do they have concerns, Madam Speaker?

Not because we are saying we are going to tighten the eligibility criteria to ensure
that parents have been in Gibraltar contributing to tax and social insurance for the
595 number of years required, because everybody expected that, whether you were in private
school, in state school, or in no school. But because the Opposition have raised a media
storm around the issue in a way that is designed to create a problem. I have seen this
before, Madam Speaker.

I have been at the receiving end of this type of politics from Members opposite,
600 when I used to sit opposite and they used to sit here, and through all of the time, thank
goodness they sit over there and I sit over here. What happens, Madam Speaker, is that
the facts soon find their way into reality in people's minds. And when all of these students
who are being told today that the terrible Government is causing them a problem realise
that they had no problem at all, and they have in their hands their brilliant A-level results,
605 their offers of University places, and their scholarships funded by a GSLP Liberal

Government that will be the only parties in this House that will vote for their money when the budget debate comes.

They will leave in September with their tuition fees paid for, their maintenance grants paid for, thanks only to the GSLP Liberal Government. Nothing to do with the people opposite who made them worried about that eligibility.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, does the hon. Member actually think that he can just stand up there and make black look white? Because that really is the opposite of what people think. It's the opposite.

I do care about the taxpayer. I will tell him something about that. We do want a crackdown on waste and abuse, but I also care about fairness.

What I care about is that all our school children, all the children of Gibraltarians and long-term resident taxpayers of Gibraltar are treated in the same way, that it doesn't matter which school you go to. There could be people that are earning more money sending children to the Government schools than are sending their children elsewhere. So what matters is fairness.

Is it going to be a means-tested thing? Or not? Because if it is not a means-tested thing, if it is about picking on people who go to School A rather than to School B, it is inherently unfair.

Does he not realise that Gibraltarians have already been excluded, children of long-term residents, taxpayers in Gibraltar and Gibraltarians have been excluded by changing that single line in the criteria. Does he not realise that? If he wants to be concerned about the taxpayer, does he also not realise that an average child, a student, going to a Government school will cost a certain amount of money?

In England, it is accepted that it costs around £9,000 to fund a child in school. If there is a mass exodus because of the bungling of this Government, from private schools to Government schools, it is going to cost the taxpayer more rather than less because of their mismanagement of this issue. Does he not accept that?

Madam Speaker: Alright, before we continue with this...

Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry can I deal with the substance of that before you deal with the process issue?

Madam Speaker: I am not going to deal with the process issue. What I am going to say is that both the Hon. the Chief Minister and the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition have been on their feet twice with lengthy questions, lengthy answers. I am concerned that this shouldn't become a debate.

So, going forward, I will allow more supplementaries if they are in, but short. And I will entreat the Hon. the Chief Minister to keep his answers also short so that we can do a question and answer and not have a debate this afternoon.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do appreciate your guidance on that. In fact, my view was that this, if it was considered to be so important, should have been an issue that perhaps hon. Members might wish to debate on a motion. But of course, if they did that, Madam Speaker, they would be exposed for the reality of what I am about to deal with.

That is to say, if the hon. Gentleman wants to try for one moment to sustain that he believes in fairness, then what he needs to do is support the Government. Because
655 there could be nothing less fair that somebody who has fulfilled the eligibility criteria should have a scholarship and that somebody who should not fulfil the eligibility criteria should also have a scholarship. Because then, what is the fairness?

If you have complied with everything that you are required to comply with, watching somebody who doesn't comply with the eligibility criteria getting away with the
660 same benefit. Isn't that what the hon. Gentleman should be concentrating on, Madam Speaker, if he genuinely wanted to make this a debate about fairness? But he gives himself away.

He says there should be nothing to do with what school you go to. It will have nothing to do with what school you go to. We have made that clear already.

If there was a misunderstanding on that, there should be no reason whatsoever
665 for there to be any further misunderstanding on that. It is about the fact that we hold more data on children who are in our schools and therefore we can more easily judge their ability to become eligible under the criteria than those children which are in my private school. So we are looking at a different process to determine their compliance
670 with the eligibility criteria.

If they comply with the same eligibility criteria that the children in the state school sector or who are not in school, then the fact that they are in a private school is irrelevant. It is that simple. But that is not convenient for the hon. Gentleman.

What he needs to do, Madam Speaker, is to continue to spray the jet fuel. That is
675 why it is not that he is not clever enough to understand it. He knows I have the utmost respect for him intellectually. It is that he wants to be purposely, politically mischievous. He wants people at Prior Park to think that we are discriminating against them when we are not. Of course, Madam Speaker, if people were to take their children out of Prior Park and send them to the Comprehensive, it would be more expensive for the Government.
680 Of course that is the case.

There is a big debate in the United Kingdom now because of the Labour Government adding VAT to private school places in the United Kingdom. It is an obvious point.

Madam Speaker, if that is the case, when we helped the establishment of Prior
685 Park, why were they against it? Isn't that the question that hon. Members opposite should be asking themselves?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, let me ask a very precise question, if I may. I am not going to go around the hedges. The Chief Minister says, as he has just stood up, he said,
690 it will have nothing to do with what school students go to.

Will have nothing to do with what school they go to. Will he, therefore, confirm that they will withdraw the amendment to the criteria that says that the applicants must attend a Government school?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, no, because that is not about the eligibility criteria
695 for the mandatory grant, Madam Speaker. That is for the automatic process that we know that we can undergo. And that is why we are saying this is about a different filter for the same eligibility criteria to be confirmed as having been fulfilled.

I would have thought, Madam Speaker, that that was easy to understand but I can
700 see, that it is equally easy to make mischief with it. So I am going to repeat the position

so that the hon. Gentleman cannot jump on the hedges and pretend the opposite with his flamethrower.

705 Whatever school you are at, or if you are not in any school, you will have to comply with the same objective eligibility criteria. If you are in one school, the assessment of compliance with the eligibility criteria will be handled in one way. If you are in another school, where the state does not have access to your data as easily as it does when you are in the state school sector, the route to confirm the compliance with that self-same identical eligibility criteria will be different.

710 It is not about criteria. It is about route-improving eligibility. The hon. Gentleman understands this perfectly.

I have the utmost intellectual respect for him. He does not want to pretend to understand it, because he wants to stand there with either napalm and the flamethrower concerning people who should be thinking about their A-levels, not about whether or not they're going to have scholarships. But, Madam Speaker, he does not care.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I have allowed the Chief Minister to say that several times but I really have to say to him that perhaps when he puts the point and he answers me again, he might want to actually use a different example. The idea and the imagery that members on this side are throwing napalm on the skin of students trying to ignite them is a disgusting imagery, by the way. It's a disgusting imagery.

720

He may want to put robust points to me, but perhaps not that one and in that way, because that is not something that I do to him, certainly on this issue. Let me ask him this, because the first line of that section of the handbook talks about applicants meeting the following criteria. It is about eligibility. It is precisely about eligibility and it is tied in with attending to a Government school, a direct contradiction with what he has said today, that it will have nothing to do with what school you go to. If it has nothing to do with what school you go to, well, then change the line. Take it back to what it was, where it did not matter what school you did go to. Does he not agree with that?

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Hon. Chief Minister: I do not agree with any of that, Madam Speaker, let alone the idea that my imagery is somehow inflammatory. My imagery is descriptive of what he has done and if he doesn't like it, Madam Speaker, he should stop being the guy who throws the stone and hides his hand behind his back. He can come here on a debate about debt and call me Dick Turpin and think that that is absolutely fine, but does not like it when I tell him that he is causing an incendiary debate to get worse. He does not like it? He should not do it. It is that simple, Madam Speaker.

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Let us be very clear. The Government has said on a number of occasions that the school that you go to is not relevant to eligibility. It is about the route to prove eligibility. That is simple enough, Madam Speaker. Simple enough that he, who I have a great intellectual respect for, I know understands.

740

But in the same way, Madam Speaker, that he wanted to create one image when he called me Dick Turpin and then sheepishly withdrew it when I responded to him in that debate, I see that he now doesn't even want to be associated with his own actions and the effect of them. So if he does not want to see the imagery of him with a flamethrower, then he should stop, Madam Speaker, causing these conflagrations.

745

Madam Speaker: I am going to stop it here because we are going too far. The last question was a repeat of the previous one, which I allowed, but the subject has been exhausted. If it is an entirely different question, I will allow it.

750 But before I allow it, I will hear it.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It is a different question, Madam Speaker. I will say this, though, if I may, before I can put the question, because I need to...

755 **Madam Speaker:** I do not want to debate. If the hon. Member wants to debate the matter, then there is a procedure for that and we can debate the matter. I have allowed both sides more leeway perhaps than I ought because it is a matter of public interest and I recognise that. A question or no question?

760 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, I will ask a question, Madam Speaker, but of course, when I ask my question, there needs to be a reciprocal, in my view, treatment because if the Chief Minister is then going to be allowed to wade into a political attack and I am not allowed to respond in making my question... I am going to put a question.

765 I am putting a question which is distinct to the one that I last asked, but surely I can preface it with something in relation to what he has just said. It will take 30 seconds.

Hon. Chief Minister: I am not poisoned, it is what I am saying, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Right, go, 30 seconds.

770

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I will say this... That any comparison that I made to him, to the hon. Member, and Dick Turpin cannot be worse than the imagery that he has concocted about children in flames. His concoction. I will ask him this. He said that in answer to the question that I asked, which is when will the Government announce the new discretionary criteria, he says they're not changing the discretionary criteria.

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But, Madam Speaker, in his hall of mirrors world of garble, he has said, and I quote, the discretionary process is simply the route for those who qualify to obtain a mandatory grant. He has suggested they're changing the discretionary criteria because that is the route, apparently, to get a mandatory grant. So what is it and when will they publish this?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry. You said you would rule on whether you would or not.

Well, Madam Speaker, the Government will set out the new rules for eligibility criteria as soon as we are able to. These things have to be tested to ensure that they do not create unfairness and they do not create any concern in people who might have believed that they had a legitimate expectation that something was going to be done. And so we are testing those robustly and we will be able to set those out as soon as we are able.

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And in doing so, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman, when he wants to comment on them, might want to keep his powder a little drier and he might find he is not accused of anything. But if he does not keep his powder dry, he might find, Madam Speaker, that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. And if he calls me one thing, I might call him another. That is the mature nature of politics these days, Madam Speaker.

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795 **Madam Speaker:** Right. The Hon. D J Bossino had a question which is different to any question that has been asked thus far.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, I am grateful, Madam Speaker. As I understand it, the eligibility criteria, one, will apply across the board. I think the Hon. Chief Minister has made that
800 absolutely and abundantly clear. Two, the eligibility criteria will, however, I think he just mentioned in his last remark, will be the subject of change, but he's not yet in a position to advise us of the change in that regard. I think he also says, three, that as far as the private schools are concerned and those who are of no school, there will be a different application process which will be adopted. In that regard, given that I have been shown a
805 letter which has been sent, I think, to parents of Prior Park in particular, and I imagine also now to parents of those children who are in the Hebrew schools, it says, a line says, and I quote, a new application process has been established, so it says established, for applicants for the school award who do not attend Government schools.

And that accords indeed with what the Hon. Chief Minister has said. But given that
810 it is already established and it will be promulgated, I think.

Madam Speaker: Sorry, I am going to interrupt the hon. Member because there is a reference in Erskine and May that supplementary questions shall not quote from letters. It's not in our rules, but it is in Erskine and May, and it is a rule which is followed in the
815 House of Commons. And so, in this instance, it would not be appropriate to quote from letters.

Hon. D J Bossino: So the question relates to that application process, which I understand has been established, whether the Hon. Chief Minister is able to provide us information as to what that application process, which differentiates the schools, is.
820

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker before I deal with the substance of that question, would the hon. Gentleman like to consider declaring an interest?

825 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker. I mean, I am not too sure whether it is appropriate to delve into personal matters like that, but my children do attend the school. But if the Hon. Chief Minister wants to, I think perhaps even seek to embarrass me in relation to that, so be it.

But I understand that there are other members who have children in different
830 schools, private schools, who will be impacted. Indeed, other members who have sought to admit their children in this particular school, which is impacted. But yes, my children are to attend that school.

Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I really do not understand how asking somebody to comply with the rules of the House is to seek to embarrass them. The hon. Gentleman might like to explain that to me over a coffee, a tea, or a pint, because it is difficult for me to fathom that when somebody has an obligation to do something and you ask them to comply with that, what you're doing is trying to embarrass them. I would have thought you just get up, you declare your interest, and you ask your question.
840

There is no embarrassment, Madam Speaker, as far as I'm concerned, that I would associate with what the hon. Gentleman has done, just that he was embarrassed into being reminded that he had to declare an interest. Anyway, Madam Speaker, the

845 Government will make public the new process as soon as we are able to. I have just indicated that we are testing it to ensure it is robust and does not create any hostages to fortune, and certainly none that might enable hon. Members opposite to be able to make the sort of incendiary comment that we have seen them make in the past weeks.

850 Finally, Madam Speaker, I am very grateful that the hon. Gentleman has quoted from a letter, although Erskine May tells him not to, that demonstrates that everything that his colleague to his left was saying was completely untrue.

855 **Madam Speaker:** All right, as I understand it, that is the end of the questions for the Hon. Chief Minister. We have some supplementaries which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, may or may not have in relation to Questions, I think 337, 338, I think it was 339 was the schedule. The buses one, yes. No, it was for the Hon. Minister for Education.

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker, you still have outstanding potential supplementaries to me on matters related to my schedules.

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Supplementary questions to Q406-408 and Q411/2025

Madam Speaker: We have 406 to 408 and 411. Any supplementaries to those? Yes.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you just bear with me while I go through this. I do in fact have a supplementary.

865 In fact, because we moved on quickly, Madam Speaker, because you appreciate it all bunched up, I did have a chance to ask a supplementary on 405, which is a very simple one, if I may. Yes. 405, Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his comprehensive answer.

870 The Chief Minister may remember that I asked a similar question on 26 March 2018 of the Father of the House, specifically in respect of GOC secretaries, GEP Limited and GSTR Limited. And, Madam Speaker, the response I had at the time from the Father of the House was, the names chosen for the companies identified in the hon. Member's question are made from letters of the Roman alphabet, which run from A to Z. There is no other name for such companies other than that which has been registered.

875 Madam Speaker, in light of the comprehensive answer the Chief Minister has given us today, I wonder whether he might wish the record to be amended in respect of that answer, although I appreciate I do not know what the rules are of the House for a previous Parliament in which a member of his Government gave such an answer.

880 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** No, Madam Speaker, I do not want to avail myself of any such opportunity because of the chapeau that I gave to the answer that I provided, which was as follows. The company names listed in Companies House, Gibraltar, are the names of the companies and do not represent abbreviations. They are nonetheless acronyms, internal acronyms, which help identify activity.

885 So there is absolutely no change to what the Father of the House said. Those are their names. And if the hon. Gentleman wants to refer me to the guidance note of Companies House, which I referred him to, Madam Speaker, he needs to understand that the Government is not bound by that guidance note, and the reason for the guidance

890 note, which is in particular to ensure that the protected words are not offended because it is the Government that gives consent for the use of the protected words.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister's answer. So is the Chief Minister telling the House that when it comes to anything incorporated by the Government they do not advise Companies House as to what any potential abbreviations or acronyms stand for? Is that correct?
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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, that is a different question. That is about the procedure that is followed by the Government when it incorporates a company and what its role in conversation with Companies House is. I do not know what that issue is.
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I can tell him that I am the person who approves the use of sensitive words, and when the Government submits for the use of a name and it has a G in it, which sometimes Companies House might think represents Gibraltar, it does not ask me for consent for that because we are the ones filing the application to use it. That is to say, consent is assumed to have been given because we are the ones seeking to use it.
905

Hon. R M Clinton: I thank the Chief Minister for that answer. If I may move on to Question 406, and I thank the Chief Minister for the schedule of properties which GAR Limited owns and manages. Can I ask the Chief Minister what is the rationale for GAR Limited owning these properties and effectively paying the Government rent?
910

For example, I notice that No. 6 is owned by GAR and yet the Government pays rent to GAR. What is the rationale for the creation of GAR?

Hon. Chief Minister: We think it is economically sensible. That is the advice that we have. It is the best way to ensure that the Government is properly accounting for its real property assets and the value of them.
915

Hon. R M Clinton: If I may move on to Question 407. Again, I am grateful for the schedule with details of assets. I am aware of the Treasury Building and the Post Office's surprise about the International Bank, but I guess it does make sense.
920

The flats, does the Chief Minister have any information as to why the Savings Bank, I mean GSBA is owned by the Savings Bank, purchased a flat for a million pounds in Ragged Staff Wharf?

Hon. Chief Minister: I do, Madam Speaker, and if the hon. Gentleman had been here for long enough and he reviewed these answers, he will know that that is the home of the Deputy Governor, as he is known, Madam Speaker. When we got back the cottage on Mount Road, the deal with the Foreign Office was that we would buy them a three-bedroom property at Queensway Quay, which would be nearer to the Convent. We did that and we received a monthly rent from the Foreign Office in respect of the use of that property. We got it at a very good rate. I cannot imagine you would get a flat with a penthouse on Queensway Quay now for anywhere near what we paid for it. Very good business it was too.
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930

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I obviously was not around at that time, but I am grateful to the Chief Minister for elucidating perhaps on that point. If I move on to GSTR on 408, and we have a schedule of 9 properties that GSTR purchased in Clemence Suites.
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By the looks of it, all at the same date in August 2019, I assume these are purchased off-plan from the developer.

940 Can I ask the Governor why did GSTR buy these properties off-plan? Have they bought any other properties in any other development in Gibraltar? Why this particular development?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, in the tail end of that supplementary, the hon. Gentleman has just asked me the question that is 411. And 411 is answered on the basis
945 that this is the only property that we have bought off-plan. So he does not need to re-ask me that because he's given notice of that question and I've answered it, I've read it out.

The only off-plan residential properties purchased by the Government, any Government-owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation-owned company, or Gibraltar Savings Bank Company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025 is by GSTR
950 Limited as set out in the answer to Question 408. So he didn't need to ask me the tail end of that question. There is the answer.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you. Sorry, Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for that, but perhaps he could answer the first end of my question, which is why this particular
955 development?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, if hon. Members stuck to your rulings and asked me only one question in each supplementary, then I would be able to answer in keeping with your rulings, which is to answer one supplementary at a time. The answer is
960 very simple, Madam Speaker. We were offered the opportunity to buy these properties at the off-plan price, which would enable us to house people that we were housing at Europlaza at rental rates whilst we would own here.

We did that, Madam Speaker. We did it very successfully for a period of time, but nonetheless some people do need to be in different places, closer to, for example, the
965 hospital where we have a lot of the people who come out to Gibraltar who require housing, and so we have reduced it to the number of properties that we think we need, which are not geographically sensitive, and therefore we have made a very large profit indeed. We have made a £1 million profit already, whilst we still retain three properties in that development, which we can use for non-geographically sensitive housing of
970 contract officers to the Government.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, if I may ask the Chief Minister just this one question, because he only needs one at a time. Were all these properties on the same floor at Clemence Suites?
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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, it is not that I only need one at a time, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be kind to me by saying that. I think he is trying to be deprecative of my mental ability, which he can be because he has been consistently, and the people of Gibraltar have nonetheless decided I should sit here and he should sit
980 there, despite him asking them for three times to put me here, there, rather than here. But never mind.

I don't know what floor they are on, Madam Speaker. I do not get into that sort of aspect of our business. It is not what I spend my time doing.

985 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I will move on now to 409. I am happy if the Chief Minister corrects me. I heard him correctly.

I think he says in terms of 409, in terms of car parking spaces, that there were 125, did I hear that correctly, at a cost of about £1 million, and they are being rented out at £100 a month. If the Chief Minister could provide the House with some information as to the rationale for that purchase.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, these are the 125 parking spaces in Ocean Spa Plaza, which we make available to the tenants of Glacis Estate and all of that area. The rationale was that we wanted to be able to provide parking spaces to residents of Glacis and that area. We issued a number of press releases at the time, but I will not rely on telling the hon. Member that this matter is a matter of public record, because if I do, it appears that I am trying to obfuscate, when in fact the reality is that they should know the facts.

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Procedural

Madam Speaker: All right, that is the end of the questions. Before we move on to the Order Paper, the Hon. Chief Minister raised a point of procedure earlier, in which I accept the Hon. Chief Minister has not asked for a ruling, but I think it is an interesting point. My tentative view, and I say this by way of tentative view, is that no Member of the House, whether it's Ministers or Opposition members, should issue statements, press releases, et cetera, once a question has been filed on the Order Paper.

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But at the moment, I leave it no higher than as a tentative view. I will look into that more carefully. I am aware that I have a matter which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, has raised with me also on the issues of press release, and I will rule on that when we next come back in April.

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And I will also... May? May, of course.

Yes, May. I could come back by myself in April, but it would not be so much fun. So I will deal with both matters when the House next sits.

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Adjournment

1020 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** I am obliged, Madam Speaker. This may now be a convenient moment then for the House to adjourn until next Wednesday at 3 p.m.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday at 3 p.m. I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

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This House will now adjourn to Wednesday at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 4.17 p.m.