



BUDGET PRESENTATION 2026



Economic Restoration and Transformation with Social Empowerment



Presented by: Hon. Minister of Finance

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INTRODUCTION

PROTOCOL SALUTATIONS

1. Madam Speaker, I stand here today sharing the anxiety that many of us feel about unfolding circumstances at the global level. Montserrat may, in global terms, be geographically miniscule, but the wellbeing of Montserrat and all of our people are affected and remain our paramount concern. I draw to the attention of this Honourable House something that I said in the presentation last year, on which I now invite reflection. I quote, “Madam Speaker, having said that, there are some hard, global truths we must face, and with which we must cope”. The world is now more uncertain than it was in October 2024, when we were elected to office. All elections have consequences and that has become almost a brutal reality when we recognise the immediate impact of the United States election on the lives of billions of people across the world. Their lives have not only been disrupted but in a number of cases upended. If this trend continues, many countries but especially small Island developing territories like Montserrat, will undoubtedly be severely impacted”.
2. I make no claim to being prescient, however, our current reality says that I was insightful. It is this insightfulness that underpins the way in which this Government works. We are evidence based, we are results driven, and we always work to improve the lives of the residents of this island. Let me emphasize that our effort to bring about an improved quality of life is not done on a sectoral basis, they are coordinated and carried out holistically, with all sectors being led by Cabinet to deliver results.
3. Madam Speaker, these are serious times, in fact some might say, these are crucial times. The pervasive uncertainty that gripped the world with the military conflict that emerged in February of this year is yet to show the full implications.

In these troubling times, Government must remain profoundly serious, be analytical, be proactive, and remain focused on results. I do not intend to create a pall of doom and gloom during this statement; however, it would be foolhardy to attempt to minimize or dismiss the emotional distress that millions of us are experiencing. Higher oil prices are never simply about spending more money for fuel. Oil and its related products contribute more to the cost of food and agricultural products, electricity and other utilities, transport and related services than any other group of imports.

4. This is the broad global context in which we now find ourselves—not of our own making, but one whose consequences we must inevitably confront. Let me illustrate this reality with a few reflections from respected voices in global economic thought:
 - As Christine Lagarde reminds us, ***‘the global economy is more interconnected than ever before. A crisis in one part of the world can quickly spread to others.’***
 - Similarly, Ben Bernanke observes that ***‘in a globalized world, economic problems do not respect national borders.’***
 - And Joseph Stiglitz underscores this point even further, ***‘the world economy is not a collection of independent economies, but a tightly linked system.’***
5. Together, these perspectives highlight a simple but sobering truth: global shocks do not remain distant, they become local realities.
6. I have set out the global context which not only evokes our concerns, empathy, sympathy and in some cases our ire and condemnation because it is the context that must drive our decision-making during the next financial year.

In that regard, I assure this Honourable House that the Government has been analytical and methodical in not only recognising the implications, but in positioning our fiscal policy and strategy to minimise the negative consequences of the uncertainty. In that regard, let us remind ourselves of what our annual budget is intended to do.

7. We are outlining our projections for revenues and expenditure for a period of one year. That is being done to enable our government to achieve specific economic, social and environmental goals. I hasten to remind everyone that the budget is a tool. The budget is an instrument. No budget in and of itself is capable of implementing tasks. The work to accomplish the goals, is done by people. This budget is a guide for actions designed to achieve short-term ambitions in a broad national context and set the foundation for long-term goals. It allows us to direct funding for selected priorities, it supports our efforts to maintain economic stability, it ensures accountability, and it creates the opportunity to reduce income inequalities. It is a systematic process based on the collective responsibility of Cabinet, in which Ministries and Agencies align their implementation work through planning. We align, we analyze, we allocate, and we provide oversight.
8. That is the backdrop against which I hope our budget will be assessed. A budget especially in a small country, reliant on budget support, cannot be an amalgamation of everything that is good to do or everything that is desirable to do. Priorities have to be established and decisions made regarding allocations. It must be accepted that if a reduction in an allocation occurs, it does not signal a diminution in the importance of that subject area. It simply means that in working with a finite projected total sum of revenue that choices must be made to ensure a balanced approach to our development.
9. Development means that all sectors, social, economic and environmental are important. Lessons have been learnt in the past when emphasis was placed only on one of those, to the detriment of other sectors.

I have taken the time to lay this out, to ensure that our people appreciate that we must focus on sound policy-making, collaboration across sectors, implementation of policy, effectiveness, efficiency, inclusiveness, transparency and non-discrimination, if we are to deliver sustainable benefits to our people, as we continue on the journey to sustainable development. In that regard, let me reiterate: we are a government for and with the people, we are strengthening our resource capacity, not only for this financial-year, but for the long term.

10. Madam Speaker, I have set the background for our presentation today. This will now enable me to provide a synopsis of our performance over the last financial year. After which I will proceed to a declaration of our intentions and priority initiatives for the 2026/27 financial year. Madam Speaker, I trust that our hardworking public officers will recognize that in presenting this information we cannot give the level of detail that they may have provided in their submissions to the Ministry of Finance. Their submissions constitute a critical part of the performance record of this government and will be presented by the various Ministers.

However, I must also set the context in relation to international and regional perspectives.

THE REVIEW

INTERNATIONAL

11. Madam Speaker, the global economy today is navigating a complex and highly uncertain environment, shaped by geopolitical tensions, volatile energy markets, and evolving trade dynamics.

Conflicts in key regions, disruptions to major shipping routes, and the persistence of elevated tariffs have created ripple effects that reach small, open economies like Montserrat, influencing the cost of imports, fuel prices, and the stability of tourism and remittance flows.

12. According to the World Bank's 2026 Global Economic Prospects, global commodity prices, including energy, are expected to moderate slightly in 2026, with Brent crude averaging around US\$60 or EC\$162 per barrel if supply remains steady. Yet, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz continue to introduce volatility in oil and gas prices, keeping energy markets elevated and uncertain. In early 2026, Brent crude has at times traded above US \$110 per barrel reflecting persistent uncertainty in global supply chains. These energy disruptions ripple through trade, raising freight, and import costs, thereby exerting upward pressure on the price of essential goods. For Montserrat, higher fuel costs directly affect electricity, transportation, and the cost of imported goods, while also influencing tourism and trade flows.

13. Trade policy developments in the United States remain a significant factor. The IMF has stated that U.S. tariff measures "have caused disruptions to global trade norms," with elevated tariff rates and ongoing trade tensions creating inefficiencies in international supply chains.

The World Bank further notes that these tariffs which have pushed U.S. trade duties to levels not seen in decades are slowing global trade and making shipping and import schedules less predictable.

14. As approximately 44 percent of Montserrat's imports originates from the United States, these developments translate into higher costs for imported goods and fuel and can disrupt supply chains that are vital to our economy.

In response, our government is increasingly focusing on regional sourcing from Caribbean partners and expanding local production, both to reduce dependency on distant markets and to strengthen economic resilience and ensure a more reliable supply of essential goods for our people.

15. Across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom, our principal funding partner, is expected to experience moderate economic growth in 2026, of approximately 1.1 per cent. Growth is subdued and subject to downside risks. At the same time, the United Kingdom has embarked on a significant reshaping of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget. In 2025 the UK Government announced plans to reduce UK aid spending from 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.3 per cent by 2027/28, in order to fund increased defence and security commitments. Under this new framework, the aid budget is expected to fall progressively making it the lowest level of UK ODA as a share of national income in decades.

16. This shift in the UK's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) strategy has implications for Montserrat. Montserrat had reached a stage in its development where it was expected to graduate from Official Development Assistance eligibility, based on GNI per capita, but we have been able to have this graduation postponed.

Since Montserrat remains dependent on ODA, it is important for Montserrat to plan for a future with less gradually declining UK funding. While Montserrat continues to be eligible for UK budgetary aid and specialised development funds, the future reductions in UK ODA highlight the need to attract foreign investment, strengthen local production, and promote economic development through private sector growth, thereby reducing our dependence on ODA support.

17. Madam Speaker, in summary, the global economic landscape is one of modest growth tempered by significant risks.

It is against this complex and evolving backdrop that the 2026/2027 budget has been crafted. Our approach is designed to maintain fiscal prudence, build resilience to external shocks, and foster sustainable economic development, safeguarding Montserrat's growth and the wellbeing of all its people.

REGIONAL

18. Madam Speaker, we have considered the global environment that sets the pace for each economy's outlook. We now turn to the regional context, which provides both a framework and a catalyst for Montserrat's continued advancement.

19. The 112th Meeting of the ECCB Monetary Council in February 2026 reaffirmed the strength and stability of our monetary union. The EC dollar remains a credible anchor, supported by strong foreign reserves. Our banking sector continues to be stable and highly liquid, with this liquidity representing productive capacity waiting to be unlocked, and capital seeking viable investment opportunities across the region.

20. The International Monetary Fund has confirmed that the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) maintained solid post pandemic growth, with economic expansion estimated at 3.0 per cent in 2025, driven largely by tourism recovery and infrastructure development. Growth is projected to improve modestly, to 3.3 per cent in 2026.

However, this remains below the approximate 7.0 per cent annual growth required to significantly transform regional output over the next decade.

21. The sub-region region has embraced a strategic “Big Push” approach, focused on accelerating structural transformation through coordinated action.

This includes strengthening Food Sovereignty through Climate-Smart Agriculture, advancing energy security through renewable energy transition, improving logistics and connectivity to enhance trade and mobility, deepening financial inclusion to expand access to capital, and investing in human capital to address skills gaps and improve productivity. These priorities align closely with Montserrat’s own national development agenda.

22. At the same time, deeper regional integration remains critical. Trade within the region continues to face constraints, particularly in transportation and associated logistics, limiting expansion into new markets. Strengthened policy coordination, including harmonized customs systems, improved trade facilitation, and more efficient institutional frameworks, will be essential to unlocking new opportunities for growth and diversification.

23. Beyond the ECCU, broader regional institutions continue to play a vital role in shaping the Caribbean’s development trajectory.

Despite recent eye-catching headlines, within CARICOM, there has been a strong focus on strengthening regional unity, advancing data driven policymaking, and addressing shared challenges such as climate resilience, food and regional security.

Continued efforts to reduce food import dependence and improve the use of data in decision making are helping to build a more resilient and self-sufficient Caribbean.

24. Similarly, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) continues to advance regional integration, supporting economic growth, social development, and coordinated policy implementation among its member states. These efforts reinforce a shared commitment to sustainable development and collective resilience.

25. Across the wider Caribbean and Overseas Territories, economic performance reflects a continued transition from recovery to consolidation and growth.

26. Madam Speaker, the regional outlook for 2026 and beyond presents a clear pathway for Montserrat. Across the Caribbean, economies are moving beyond recovery toward a phase of consolidation, resilience, and structural transformation.

This regional momentum creates tangible opportunities for Montserrat to accelerate its own development, deepen integration, and position itself more competitively within both regional and global markets.

27. In this context, Montserrat is not operating in isolation, but as part of a wider regional movement toward sustainability, self-reliance, and inclusive growth. By aligning national priorities with regional strategies, we are well positioned to harness these opportunities and translate them into meaningful outcomes for the people of Montserrat.

LOCAL

28. Madam Speaker, Montserrat has moved decisively beyond post pandemic recovery and is now firmly advancing toward a period of renewal and greater self-reliance. This progress is being driven by sustained infrastructure development, expanding private sector activity, and targeted strategic investment that together are reshaping the national economic landscape.

29. The economy is projected to grow by 3 per cent in 2026, underpinned by strong performance across public services, real estate, construction, and financial services.

At the same time, the reality of our population being only 4,325, presents a timely opportunity to respond proactively to evolving global but also local impactful demographic trends, including declining fertility rates, a changing workforce, and an increasing elderly population. These shifts underscore the importance of strengthening pensions, healthcare, and social services, while advancing targeted policies and innovative approaches to expand and sustain the workforce. In doing so, we ensure that growth remains inclusive, balanced, and resilient.

30. In direct support of this national agenda, the Government has taken deliberate and strategic steps to lay a solid foundation for economic renewal. The past year, marking the first full fiscal cycle under the current political administration, was used purposefully to establish critical building blocks for long-term progress. Among these were the launch of the Soft Loans Programme - Montserrat Business Progressive Fund to support small businesses, farmers, and fishers; the reduction by 50 per cent of the freight element to calculate import charges on all items in order to ease the cost of living and the cost of doing business; and the establishment of a dedicated Business and Trade Investment Unit to drive and coordinate economic development initiatives.

31. Simultaneously, the Government advanced a comprehensive renewable energy strategy. This approach addresses immediate energy needs through solar and battery storage systems, while laying the groundwork for medium to long term energy independence through geothermal development, an essential intervention in a context where our energy costs remain among the highest in the region. This has been facilitated by restoring the batteries on the Lookout solar farm and the commencement of construction of an additional 1MegaWatt solar farm in Brades.
32. Improvements in access and connectivity were also realized, including the introduction of new routes and the return of Twin Otter services, strengthening links for residents, the diaspora, and the tourism sector. We do have issues on the regulatory framework for the Twin Otter service which we will get sorted in collaboration with the FCDO and our regulator. While we were unable to procure a ferry service on time, we will recommence the procurement process much earlier in this fiscal year.
33. Targeted social and developmental interventions have been equally important. These include expanded support programmes for young people through summer initiatives and school meal programmes, the upgrading of the HYPE programme, the delivery of new social housing, and critical, though often understated, investments in public infrastructure, such as electricity distribution, waste management, and water storage and distribution systems. Work is ongoing on replacing aged water lines in Lookout, Gerald's and Drummonds, replacement of five water tanks with modern glass fused systems to upgrade storage capacity from one to three days, and the upgrading and protection of our water Spring sources. On the electrical side we have placed ducts underground in Lookout, Gerald's and Drummonds to facilitate the placing of our medium voltage lines underground for resilience purposes. The sewerage system in Lookout is being upgraded by creating a modern sewerage treatment system in the Margarita Bay Area. We continue to upgrade the Carrs Bay corner to facilitate better line of sight and traffic management, while at the same time upgrading the small vendor facilities in that area.

Collectively, these efforts reflect a balanced and inclusive approach, supporting the private sector as the backbone of the economy while investing in the wellbeing and future potential of our people.

34. Building on this momentum, the Government continues to advance a strong programme of reforms and investments aimed at addressing immediate priorities while securing long-term national development. This includes the introduction of a minimum wage to strengthen income security.

We continue to progress well on the new hospital project to enhance healthcare delivery, and the development of the Enhanced Country Poverty Assessment to guide medium to long term planning and national priorities.

35. Strategic direction will be further reinforced through the development and implementation of ongoing work on the Sustainable Development Strategy and the National Development Plan.

Together, these frameworks will articulate a clear 15-year national vision, supported by a focused four-year development programme designed to deliver measurable outcomes.

36. We have contracted Ernst and Young to undertake a comprehensive public service pay review. We are working on the advancement of key social policies, including Sports and Recreation and Population policies, aimed at improving quality of life and addressing demographic challenges. Targeted sector strategies, such as the Agricultural Transformation Strategy and the Medium-Term Access Strategy, integrating both air and ferry services, will continue to strengthen economic resilience, connectivity, and Food Sovereignty.

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT: MONTSERRAT GOVERNMENT UK OFFICE (MGUKO)

37. Madam Speaker, beyond our regional partners, Montserrat's global reach is strengthened through its diaspora, particularly through the work of the Montserrat Government UK Office. In 2025, the Montserrat Government UK Office focused on delivery, engagement, and strengthening Montserrat's international presence while building practical pathways for diaspora participation in national development.

The Office continued to represent Montserrat across UK Government, Parliament, and Overseas Territory networks, including support for youth engagement through the UK Youth Parliament and the Overseas Territories Youth Summit. It also represented Montserrat at key commemorative events such as Remembrance Day and Commonwealth Day, reinforcing the island's visibility in shared institutions.

38. Parliamentary and diplomatic engagement were strengthened. This has been achieved through ongoing engagement with UK Government departments, advancing national priorities in economic development, climate resilience, health, education, and infrastructure.

39. On trade and investment, the Office supported early-stage investor engagement and discussions on infrastructure, innovation, and financial resilience, including engagement on correspondent banking challenges and opportunities. Diaspora engagement remained a key focus, with progress on a Montserrat Diaspora Database, a UK based Business Directory, and the inaugural Montserrat Diaspora Leadership Conference. These initiatives strengthened connections with professionals, businesses, and community leaders across the diaspora.

40. Looking ahead to 2026, MGUKO will deepen diaspora engagement, strengthen trade and investment linkages, enhance advocacy, and continue supporting cultural and community initiatives across the global Montserrat family.

41. Madam Speaker, we will also be further leveraging the presence of the Montserrat Diaspora in the United States and Canada. The Office of the Premier will be making a significant effort to further engage the diaspora from these countries in Montserrat's development.

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate a government that is intentional, forward looking, and committed to delivering inclusive development, positioning Montserrat for sustained growth, resilience, and long-term prosperity.

RECAP OF MAJOR POLICY OUTCOMES IN 2025/26

42. Madam Speaker, this budget does not stand on its own. It follows on from last year's budget and it precedes next year's budget. Policy implementation is a continuous process. In that context, it is important for us to recap and recall what was accomplished during the last financial year before we promulgate our plans for this next financial year.

43. Let me state clearly the number of highlights or the length of the text attributed to any given Ministry, Department or entity should not be used by the keyboard pundits among us as an indication of the significance of the work of such entities, nor the level of gratitude the Cabinet feels towards their accomplishments. We must be practical and realistic; our people want to see that progress is being made and that Montserrat will continue to rise.

44. I assure everyone, progress was made and continues to be made. I will provide a synopsis of the progress without in any way attempting to rank or rate the work done by any particular public service Ministry, Department or other entity.

Madam Speaker last financial year we saw the following:

- ***The continuation of the twin otter services to the island*** from October throughout the festive season. As a small island, we own our peculiarities, we recognized the challenges we face when it comes to access, but we have worked very diligently to ensure that solutions are being provided.

We promised the people of this country improved access and the journey has begun. It is not smooth sailing, but we are committed to ensuring that improvement will materialize over the coming year and we will produce a revised access strategy to guide the way.

- ***We have reduced the backlog of tax refunds during fiscal 25/26*** – simply returning the monies owed to people of Montserrat.
- ***We have introduced a new Public Procurement Act and Regulations (2025) which will*** ensure a more transparent, competitive-open market process is conducted when procuring items or services across the Government of Montserrat and its agencies.
- We have ***launched the Montserrat business progressive fund (the soft loan scheme) through collaboration with the ECCB and the Government Montserrat***, designed to stimulate economic growth, enhance Food Sovereignty and empower local entrepreneurs.
- ***The recommissioning of the Secondary School green houses*** as a commitment to the youth on the island while reinforcing the principles of Food Sovereignty for the younger generation. This will teach them the benefits of modern technology in agriculture which can provide business opportunities for our youth while at the same time assisting in meeting our target for Food Sovereignty.
- ***The commissioning of the Safeguarding Board*** as a protection measure for the vulnerable, both children and adults.

- ***Setting up of a Special and Educational Needs Disability Unit it will be familiarly known as the (SEND) unit.*** We continued to focus on a wholesome society and this means that the budget was designed to cater to every individual on this island, no matter their needs. We have had some very encouraging progress with some of our children with the kind intervention of volunteers from overseas. We are creating a permanent unit drawing on the support of trained locals and our overseas volunteers.
- ***Infrastructural upgrades and digital transformation*** in schools and across a number of government owned buildings will significantly improve the conditions under which people learn and work.
- ***Collaborations between the Government of Montserrat*** and
 - *CDB to improve access to farm lands,*
 - *We continue to work collaboratively with potential private investors to create business ventures on island to create additional employment opportunities, government revenue and export growth.*
- ***Near completion of the Household Budgetary Survey*** as part of the Enhanced Country Poverty Assessments. This will help to improve social conditions of our communities. Unfortunately, we have not been able to complete the project within the fiscal 25/26 period.
- ***Continued provision of housing assistance*** to aid construction, completion and repairing of houses on the island
- ***Completion of the Agricultural Transformation Strategy*** which focuses on food sovereignty, economic growth and national development has been completed.
- ***Major progress on the hospital development project*** along with the procurement of critical equipment to outfit the hospital.
- ***Progress to completion of the 750kw Solar project*** and securing £5.9m in UK funding to advance the Green Energy Transition project.
- ***Successful flow testing of the geothermal wells,*** as we continue to move toward geothermal energy production.

- ***The successful staging of the produced in Montserrat Expo (PRIME) 2025*** . Business were assessed to identify the technical support needs in association with the staging of PRIME which has led to:
- ***The Montserrat initiative rebranded which promises to meet retailed standards*** - packaging labeling, barcoding and a consistency of goods and services to the market.
- ***Micro-small medium enterprise (MSME) training and Capacity building***, to enable growth in the smallest of operations.
- ***The launching of the Invest in Montserrat brand***. Twelve small businesses have capitalized on this initiative where they have seen a dramatic increase in their sales.

OVERARCHING GOVERNANCE

45. Madam Speaker, in general terms we draw guidance on matters of Governance from the Westminster Parliamentary System and the principles and practices of HMG.

In that regard, I wish to remind every one of us of what is stated in HMG's Ministerial Code at Paragraph 1.5 of Section A. I quote "Serving the country and the public in the Ministerial Office is a privilege. Ministers should be courteous and professional in all their dealings and treat those with whom they come into contact with consideration and respect. Working relationships including with civil servants, ministerial and parliamentary colleagues and parliamentary staff should be proper and appropriate. Harassing, bullying or other inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour wherever it takes place is not consistent with the Ministerial code and will not be tolerated".

46. I know that the Cabinet that I have the honour to lead endorses that statement. It must be the standard for Montserrat also. In that regard, we will continue working under the principle of Collective Responsibility to treat these Budgetary Estimates as the only nationally directed and Cabinet approved Estimates for Revenues and Expenditure. We have worked to ensure that questions submitted by the Parliamentary Opposition are responded to in the manner required by Standing Orders.

47. I take the time here to draw attention to these matters of governance because the Estimates are a crucial part of good governance not simply a constitutional obligation.

In the context of good Governance, I am pleased to record that the relationship that has been established and maintained with Her Excellency the Governor has resulted in timelier implementation of a range of important decisions that rebounded to benefit all our people.

Similarly, the relationship between the Cabinet, the Deputy Governor, the Honourable Attorney General and the Honourable Financial Secretary means that decisions are taken in an atmosphere of mutual respect in which all officials appreciate the limits of each other's authorities but are quick to identify and utilise the synergies of those authorities.

48. We are hoping that if we at our level can set and maintain such an example that our Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Agencies and Supervisors will all accept that it is doable. What I have just described confirms the high standard of governance and the atmosphere of mutual respect which once again permeates the highest levels of authority in Montserrat. This is not a digression Madam Speaker; it is a foundation upon which this budget is based. Governance by its very nature implies accountability at all levels of the Public Service, therefore we are encouraging every public officer to embrace this budget as one of their most important tools for work.

49. The old adage that some see the glass as half empty while others see the glass as half full is instructive. However, I must also add that some are grateful to have the glass because it provides opportunities. In our case it is important that we do not fall into the trap of negativity and negativism by saying "*Finance didn't give us what we asked for so we cannot accomplish our tasks*".

Instead, we invite our public sector managers, in particular, to recognise that even in the largest and most successful economies in the world, choices have to be made, with priorities always having ascendancy over the less impactful. ***Governance is not just about government.*** Governance **will fail** if we do not have effective policy implementation and be able to modify priorities or dispense with areas of our Ministries which are no longer meaningful.

50. The public sector is the engine of implementation of government policy. That means that the public sector must ensure that the projects, programmes and activities are aligned and coordinated across sectors.

We would not like it if Government Ministers reached into the realms of responsibility of the public servants to lead in terms of operational and financial management. It is implementation that delivers the results that affect people's lives. It is Leadership that makes public sector workers deliver their best efforts. It is Management that coordinates the work of different ministries and departments. It is Teamwork that creates synergies.

51. Madam Speaker, I am inviting our Permanent Secretaries and other Accounting Officers to do some introspection. Have you been a Transformational Leader? Have you been an effective manager? Have you led your team with both empathy and competence and willingness to think outside the box?

52. Madam Speaker let us understand something. Montserrat needs a public service that accepts that it must be both developmental and regulatory. Montserrat cannot achieve food sovereignty if the Department of Agriculture does not implement policy effectively. Our infrastructure cannot be effectively maintained if BUILTE does not implement. Our education programmes will fail if the Ministry of Education does not implement them.

Our health and wellness intentions will not be realised if our Ministry of Health does not implement effectively. Madam Speaker, Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Directors have clearly defined roles. Our development needs all of us to play our part cooperatively.

53. I stress the need for all of us to recognise that there are two ways to look at Budgetary Estimates. We can see the Estimates as limiting policy implementation or we can see the Estimates as enabling implementation of policy priorities. It is our mindset that drives the interpretation of possibilities as against embracing limitations.

I reiterate, our people deserve a public service that focuses on action and implementation. Regulation and discussion have their place but it is implementation that achieve goals.

54. I believe that although we have made commendable strides by using technology to improve public services, there is more that we can do. In fact, technology enhances effectiveness by reducing costs and times required for tasks. In order for Montserrat to re-develop we will need a leadership mindset at all supervisory levels.

55. It means that we believe we can:

- Improve our lives by working with others
- Embrace the lessons and feedback we get from stakeholders
- Show empathy and understanding as needed
- Deal with stress without stressing others
- Remain flexible but focused. If one way doesn't work, we try a new method quickly
- See problems not only as challenges but opportunities to create solutions
- Live by the same standards of professionalism that we demand of those we lead

- Take time to listen. We do not only issue directives and instructions in other words as Ghandi said **“Let us become the change we all want to see” and manage the budget allocated under your charge as accounting and accountable officers responsibly and within the limits as approved.**

56. I repeat, the budget is a planning framework. It is not the implementation of the work. I stress that point because that understanding is vital for us to fully grasp the reason and value of a budget. I strongly encourage Public Sector Managers, Leaders and Accounting Officers to:

- Remove unclear operational priorities
- Eliminate the busy work that doesn't produce beneficial results
- Build your team's capacity
- Increase and improve your strategic focus
- Be visionary but be vigilant
- Remain realistic and practical
- Collaborate, coordinate and cooperate with other Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Stakeholder organisations.
- Increase structured dialogue for cross-cutting activities in which several entities have key roles.
- Work with a sense of mission with policies and priorities.
- Build your team. Make your workplace not only a productive place but an accountable and happy place.

“See this budget as your North Star!”

57. It is important that we work well together. The public service spends much more money in the Montserrat economy than the private sector does. It still employs the most people and it has the most regulatory power.

Let us with this budget make those realities tools of change. Change that makes the lives of the people of Montserrat better and our journey on the road to sustainable development a smoother one. Let us all commit to keep Montserrat rising.

INTENTIONS & PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR 2026

58. Madam Speaker, so far in this presentation I have shared information which describes the harsh global context that was thrust upon us in recent times, reviewed in succinct manner the areas of significant accomplishment during the last financial year and briefly described the existing overarching governance umbrella.

It must be stressed Madam Speaker, that context of the UK's reduced aid budget should not be overlooked, nor the added scrutiny that will be applied because of it.

It speaks the transparency and trust between the UK government and our government that funding was earmarked, for priority initiatives for this year. These areas include continued funding for our Access Strategy, Health and Education transformation initiatives, Maintenance and Private sector development. I will now proceed to identify our priority intentions and initiatives for the new financial year.

ACCESS

59. Madam Speaker, we will continue to build on the momentum created by the strategy we introduced in 2025 and extend that effort for the next three years at least.

The lead agencies have already seen the value of close collaboration and in that regard the Ministry of BUILTE, the Access Department and the Tourism Authority will continue such work to improve airport facilities, asset protection and passenger experience at the airport.

60. Additionally, work which has already begun in relation to regulatory compliance and capacity building will continue. The airlines servicing Montserrat will operate under service contracts in which performance measures and expectations are clearly delineated. We envisage that all of our efforts to improve airline connectivity will result in a generally smoother visitor experience which will in turn lead to greater traveler interest in Montserrat.

61. Madam Speaker, the challenges we encountered in resuming a consistent ferry service have been discussed at length some might say discussed ad nauseum in this Honourable House, on the airways and social media. We have consistently shared information on those challenges. However, we are committed to finding a solution that will result in the operation (on a regular basis) of a SOLAS compliant vessel.

Our intention is to explore the operational and financial viability of a year-round service for passengers and cargo including local products destined for exports. Success in this intention could result in significant earning opportunities for our fresh and processed producers on Island. It is therefore our intention to commence the procurement process for a ferry within the first quarter of this fiscal year.

TOURISM

62. The Montserrat Tourism Authority will continue to prioritize marketing initiatives geared at stimulating visitor arrivals. Montserrat not only in psychosocial terms but in terms of Montserrat as a uniquely appealing place.

That characteristic of our Island will remain the backbone of our marketing thrust in this new financial year. We will utilise all feasible and affordable channels and opportunities to optimise both visitor arrivals and guest experiences as a foundation for sustainability in Tourism.

63. Product development will remain a focus of the Tourism Authority to maximise the possibilities that can arise from return visits. Madam Speaker, the Authority will deliver Training in Sites and Attractions Management, Tour and Taxi Training, and Customer Service training.

Focus will also be placed on completing the Tourism Standards programme for the sector as well as to deliver Tourism Week of Activities and improve signage across the island. I am sure we are all delighted with the reopening of St. Georges Hill and will comply with the necessary management arrangements that have been put in place for our safety.

64. Additionally, Madam Speaker, improvements to beaches and other attractions will be carried out as well as a continuation of elements for the CESI programme to include clean up campaigns, school programmes, tree planting and outreach and collaboration with the STEAM – Science, Technology, Environment, Art, Math Programme.

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

65. Madam Speaker, the staff, technicians and on-the-ground-teams of BUILTE demonstrated in 2025 what can be done with proficient operational leadership backed by competence when critical resources are provided. The Government made a valiant effort to provide the critical resources.

We have all seen the results of their efforts. BUILTE is committed for the new financial year to undertake several priority initiatives, programmes and projects, these include:

- A strengthened Building Maintenance Programme, moving away from reactive repairs toward a risk-based, multi-year maintenance approach.
- Expanded road and drainage maintenance across Montserrat, including ghaut crossings, particularly on secondary and community roads vulnerable to flooding and erosion.
- The maintenance of existing Geothermal assets.
- Improving the approach to the management and implementation of fleet and plant maintenance, thus ensuring heavy equipment availability for infrastructure works, disaster response, and resilience.
- Utilising the technical and apprenticeship pathways to build local capacity in construction, mechanics, and infrastructure-related trades.

66. These efforts are aimed at reducing long-term costs, improving safety, and extending the life of public assets.

67. In addition to the above, we will maintain the drive to advance transitioning to green energy, which will include additional solar generation and battery energy storage, transmission and distribution upgrade extending the life and serviceability of public assets, while ensuring that safety improvement remains one of the cornerstones of the work of the Ministry.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

68. Madam Speaker, this government remains focused on continued transformation within the society. We intend to make changes that will create even better and more equitable opportunities for our people not only within the region but also within the international arena, that will help to make us an even more resilient society.

69. The priority areas within social transformation I will now identify, are closely aligned with and identified by the allocations for the lead Ministries and Departments.

HEALTH

70. Madam Speaker, this Government has invested in health in a manner commensurate with our commitment to a quality of life driven by health and wellbeing.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to utilize a strategic approach to acquiring the necessary resources, tackling issues and breaking barriers that hamper the improvement necessary for a healthy nation, reduce health inequalities, a reduction in the long-term cost of care and treatment as well as the maintenance of sustainable health and social services on the island.

71. The work of the Ministry will continue to be based on the Health Service Transformation Initiative. Under the initiative the priority work streams are – Accountability & Improvement, Workforce Strengthening and Sustainable Operational Capacity. These are all areas that the Government confirmed as priorities upon taking office. Additionally, we will maintain our strategic partnership with PAHO and other regional health service institutions to create greater momentum in priority health system strengthening and reform areas, including health financing, service transformation, hospital readiness, and governance oversight.

72. The Ministry of Health has established objectives and performance indicators all of which relate to improving the quality of care and medical services available at primary, secondary and tertiary levels as well creating systems for more timely delivery of all care, especially urgent care.

EDUCATION

73. The Education Programme Madam Speaker, that commenced in 2025/26 will continue into 2026/27 and centers around five (5) pillars:

- 1) Improving Learning Outcomes
- 2) Digital Transformation
- 3) Teacher Retention & Workforce Strengthening
- 4) Student Safeguarding & Endangerment
- 5) Infrastructure and Equipment Adequacy

74. Madam Speaker, we have chosen here to identify the priority areas of focus for Education in the near term, we will not delve into detailed analytical descriptions because such details were consistently provided to this Assembly and our country throughout the year in a series of Ministerial Statements and in comprehensive responses to questions posed. All of that information constitutes an official part of the records of the Assembly and have been memorialised in the Hansard.

YOUTH AND SPORTS

75. The Department of Youth will continue to focus on the advancement of youth initiatives for 2026/27. Madam Speaker this will see the finalization and introduction of the National Sports Policy that will help to establish a clear framework for sustainable sports development and longer-term investment in sports.

76. Further Madam Speaker, the Department will continue to implement an expansion and improvement of school-to-work transition programmes, namely HYPE Apprenticeship, School Leavers' Programme, and Career Day. This expansion will ensure greater productive engagement of youth.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Deputy Governor, the Department intends to offer certification opportunities thus enhancing the employability of young persons.

COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS

77. Madam Speaker, this Government alongside the Ministry of BUILTE will continue to recognise the role of community and faith-based organisations as partners in social cohesion, economic development, youth engagement, and wellbeing, signaling targeted support for programmes that strengthen these institutions, including Diaspora engagement.

HOUSING

78. Madam Speaker, the Government has encouraged residents to invest in home ownership over the years and has created an enabling environment for this to happen. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs and Sports (MALHEYAS) will continue to administer the Housing Assistance Programme. The scale and scope of the programme will be monitored and adjusted to align with resources as anticipated resources become available during the financial year. We are planning with flexibility and agility in mind. One of the primary advantages of the programme, it provides needed equity to leverage mortgage financing, increase the number of habitable dwellings, improve living conditions, and strengthen residential resilience against climate change and natural disasters.

79. The Ministry is convinced that a new Housing Policy is a critical ingredient for sustained success in the implementation of a Housing Strategy. Work will continue to explore the most feasible means of creating a new physical development plan informed by all relevant post eruption realities.

PUBLIC MEDIA

80. Radio Montserrat (ZJB) and the Government Information Unit have provided yeoman service to the island and its diaspora through the dissemination of current information on the activities of the government while simultaneously providing services that inform, entertain and educate.

For many years, these two entities have operated separately though they share a single media space and even more importantly, human and financial resources.

81. The staff who operate within these two organizations are highly specialized and who have for too long been unheard. Today, I am pleased to inform that this Government has decided to create a re-organized entity which will officially be known as the Broadcasting Unit, ZJB the Spirit of Montserrat. Therefore, the principal focus in this financial year will be operationalizing the Unit while at the same time strengthening the legislative framework which guides the organization. Being mindful of the trends surrounding Broadcasting and its standards and legislation, Montserrat will not be viewed as trailing behind but rather would be evolving to meet the changing media landscape.

82. This significant administrative change will be accompanied by a sustained and systematic effort to improve capacity, competence and professionalism within the consolidated unit. It will involve a mix of overseas attachments and in-service experiential training and mentoring. ZJB will be celebrating 75 years of dedicated service to our people this year.

AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

83. Madam Speaker, the Agricultural Transformation Strategy (ATS) is guided by a clear mandate: ***“the sustained development of the agricultural sector through the competent management of marine, terrestrial, financial, and human resources”***.

This strategic approach recognizes that long-term growth in agriculture depends on balancing productivity with responsible stewardship of the nation’s natural and economic assets.

84. At the core of this strategy Madam Speaker, is a commitment to strengthening the systems that support farmers, fishers, and other stakeholders across the sector.

By effectively managing land and marine resources, investing wisely in financial support mechanisms, and building human capacity. The strategy aims to create a more resilient agricultural industry.

85. Madam Speaker, implementation is driven through the provision of technical assistance, essential inputs, materials, and critical support services. Farmers and producers are equipped with the tools, knowledge, and infrastructure necessary to improve productivity, adopt modern practices, and respond to evolving market demands. Furthermore, through this coordinated and resource-conscious approach, the Agricultural Transformation Strategy seeks to enhance food sovereignty, stimulate economic growth, and ensure that agriculture remains a sustainable pillar of national development.

86. The Department anticipates that successful implementation under the strategy will bring Montserrat and the Department in such alignment that as is stated in the vision the Department will be recognized as the lead agency supporting the sustained production and consumption of fresh local food - the foundation of a healthier, wealthier, Montserrat society.

PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

87. Madam Speaker, Public Sector Transformation requires fundamental change to the way in which services are delivered, the Honourable Deputy Governor and her team have embarked upon a systematic process to correct, clarify and improve systems within the Public Service. These include efforts to modernize HR practices, strengthen performance management, deploy digital tools and AI solutions, and improve accountability mechanisms across government.

Work will continue to implement projects that will have immediate operational impact, such as better communication with the wider public service, providing access to information, streamlining procedures, standardizing documents and introducing supporting policies.

88. Madam Speaker, we continue to prioritize people, especially the vulnerable, and this government has embarked on a series of initiatives to further safeguard those persons who have given of their service and are now retired. We are ensuring that no individual receives a pension that is less than the social welfare benefit. Plans are also underway to explore allowing the Social Security Fund to make government pension payments, so that, rather than having to navigate two separate processes, pensioners will deal with a single institution.

89. Work will commence shortly to revise the current pension scheme to make it more equitable.

This will include Madam Speaker, a move towards a defined contribution plan with transition arrangements and options for members of statutory bodies who are not part of an existing plan and members of the private sector to join. In short, we do not wish to punish persons who under the current scheme have to serve a lifetime to get their pension benefits.

This proposed scheme will be open to both public and private sector workers. As we chart the course for the year ahead, this budget places our people at the centre of government's priorities.

It balances prudence with progress, reducing unsustainable costs while creating room to care for the vulnerable, reward effort and prepare our people for the future.

SAFETY & SECURITY

90. Madam Speaker, safety and security where the people of Montserrat are concerned are core priorities of Government.

Improvements have been achieved with staffing levels of the Royal Montserrat Police Service and Fire department and with improved resources. The intention is to continue to enhance these services in the new year, to ensure that the minimal crime-free environment that we have known to thrive in for many years, is firmly maintained.

91. A safeguarding hub has brought a new dimension of individual security to our population with a committed and capable staff assigned to lead those efforts with the requisite competence, care and concern.

IMMIGRATION

92. Madam Speaker, it is important for us to recognise that our new Immigration Department is on a path to improvement by raising its standards, its technology, its effectiveness and customer service.

Building on the achievements made thus far, the Immigration Department will continue to secure the island's borders and the processing of both inbound and outbound passengers in a courteous and efficient manner.

In keeping with the objectives of the Memoranda of Understanding which has been signed with the Customs Department, the Royal Montserrat Police Service and the Labour Department, there will be a renewed thrust towards greater collaboration.

Multi-agency field work will be increased aimed at providing guidance to encourage compliance with the Immigration laws and Labour Code.

93. Madam Speaker, travelers are always desirous of a seamless transition when interacting with Immigration personnel. To this end, discussions will be ongoing with the view of establishing a new border security system to provide an improved and a more efficient platform for persons traversing our borders. The Department intends to expedite the installation of a technologically enhanced management system as an adjunct to the recently commissioned digital Immigration system. The Department is convinced that the new system will greatly improve visitor experiences on arrival and departure.

94. Madam Speaker, it is imperative that our legislative framework remains relevant and responsive to our local needs. To this end, I am pleased to inform you that work will commence on the review of the current Immigration Act with a view to identifying key areas for reform and modernization. Moreover, to ensure that staff remain conversant with the legislative mechanisms which guide their daily operations.

ARTS & CULTURE

95. The significance of cultural events in the life of the people remains under-recognized and under-appreciated. Madam Speaker, in the context of our intentions for the new financial year, culture and cultural expression and the business opportunities that arise from the orange economy remain a priority for this Administration.

The success of our year-end festival, the Calabash festival, and the recently concluded St. Patrick's observations and activities point to the psycho-social importance attached to each of them.

96. Additionally, less established events such as – food fairs, market day, PRIME and literary festivals such as Alliouagana Festival of the Word are pointing to business related export possibilities for Montserrat. This Government is clear-eyed about these opportunities that culture and its commercial expression can offer, not only for individual and national income but family income as well.

The involvement of youth must remain a consistent part of this thrust. That will ensure sustainability while offering the potential for income earning opportunities in non-traditional areas.

97. Many of these areas at the global level have enabled young people to profit from displaying their cultural related abilities. It will also preserve our heritage and traditions. We will build on the gains made in the last financial year relating to the teaching of masquerade, the calypso artform and steel pan within the schools. We must continue to preserve our culture.

98. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the Montserrat Arts Council is keen on the development of hallmark cultural events which will be capable of attracting increased visitor arrivals annually. This will entail the exploration of an international music festival and the revival of major heritage-themed festivals.

TECHNOLOGY

99. Madam Speaker our smallness should not inhibit us in any way from embracing all the benefits we can derive from the greater use of technology. However, as a responsible government we are taking cyber security seriously.

100. Madam Speaker, following on from the recent National Cyber Risk Assessment, the Government of Montserrat will be taking steps to improve/ enhance its cyber security resilience amidst the rising threats globally on ICT infrastructure and financial payment systems. Cabinet has approved a National Cyber Security Strategy which is currently being implemented through the restructured Department of Information, Technology and E-Government Services (DITES).

101. Further Madam Speaker, DITES, through the Office of the Premier will establish a national cyber security campaign. This campaign will involve online ICT training, workshops, radio programmes and community outreach. DITES will deploy cyber security monitoring equipment to further boost its effectiveness at detecting and responding to ongoing cyber security threats and vulnerabilities.

✓ *Digital Empowerment*

102. Madam speaker, digital empowerment for our entire society is emerging as a critical need. DITES will continue outreach to digitally empower communities to be competent participants in the digital world.

✓ ***Leadership Training for Technology***

103. As technology continues to evolve, it is essential that leaders become expert at driving innovation and enhancing their leadership and management skills in this fast-paced, globally competitive technology age. Agile leadership, and strategic project planning, risk management, and leadership branding are now mandatory skill sets for each and every leader.

✓ ***Data Protection/ Data Privacy***

104. The Government of Montserrat will accelerate its digital agenda via enhancing/ expanding digital services to citizens, the expectation is that there will be high-quality services that protect the privacy and expectations of citizens. We will aggressively pursue the adoption of data protection and data privacy legislation. Such actions will boost citizen confidence, mitigate against cyber threats, demonstrate technology leadership and compliance with regional and international standards and regulations.

✓ ***Artificial Intelligence***

105. The adoption of AI tools across government agencies is increasing in an ad hoc manner and the challenges have become evident, such as unclear governance, lack of usage guidelines, cyber security risks and choosing the right AI tool for government. Government will seek to introduce appropriate legislation.

✓ ***Disaster Recovery/ Business Continuity Planning***

106. Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity planning are crucial for government operations as they ensure the rapid resumption of critical services and business processes after a disaster. As the reliance on technology increases. There must be Business Continuity Plans that are comprehensive, practical and can be easily revised.

✓ **Data Management**

107. Data Management is a Key Component of Cybersecurity in Government as it ensures the effective management, use, and protection of data. Good data governance is essential for governments to become more data-driven and to extract value from data assets. It enables greater data access, sharing, and integration, increasing overall efficiency and accountability. DITES, through the Office of the Premier, will advance a Data Governance Policy, Data Management Framework and Digitization Policy and Implementation Framework.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

108. In the 2026/27 financial year Madam Speaker, the Regional Affairs Unit will continue its focus on managing the annual contributory obligations on behalf of the Government of Montserrat with a view to eliminating any outstanding contributions owed to regional and external organisations by the Government of Montserrat. As with any department charged with diplomatic relations and protocol, training opportunities will be sought for staff to increase their knowledge of best practice and to enhance their current skills. In a similar vein, the Unit will analyse data from correspondences received from regional and external organizations which relate to training with a view of assessing the benefits to the island and to further support budgetary submissions.

109. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, plans to review the current Order of Precedence in this financial year will be actioned.

BUGETARY ALLOCATIONS RECURRENT AND CAPITAL 2025/26 AND 2026/27

➤ TOTAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE – 2025/26 AND 2026/27

110. Madam Speaker, I now turn to a summary of the fiscal outturn for 2024/25, the revised position for 2025/26, and the budget estimates for the 2026/27 financial year.

➤ 2024/25 OUTTURN

111. Madam Speaker, for the financial year 2024/25, total recurrent revenue collected was \$165.29m, comprising local revenue of \$61.08m (37 per cent) and Budgetary Aid of \$104.22m (63 per cent). This outturn reflects continued strength in domestic revenue mobilization, supported by steady inflows from key tax categories and non-tax sources. Budgetary aid remained the larger component of recurrent financing, underscoring the continued importance of external support in maintaining fiscal stability.

112. On the expenditure side, total recurrent expenditure amounted to \$161.19m, resulting in a recurrent surplus of approximately \$4.11m for the year while capital expenditure stood at \$24.69m, bringing total expenditure for 2024/25 to \$185.88m.

➤ 2025/26 REVISED ESTIMATES

113. At the end of fiscal year 2025/26 revised expenditure was as follows:

- Total Recurrent Revenue was estimated at \$175.88m, comprising Local Revenue of \$54.39m (30.9 per cent) and Budgetary Aid of \$120.24m (69.1 per cent)
- Recurrent expenditure stands at \$190.76m, reflecting adjustments in compensation-related costs and goods and services, particularly services, relative to the original estimates.

- Capital spending for the year is revised upward to \$162.79m, bringing total spending for 2025/26 to \$353.55m, compared with the originally approved total of \$312.16m. The appropriate procedures for supplementaries were followed during the course of the financial year.

➤ **2026/27 BUDGET ESTIMATES**

114. Madam Speaker, I now summarize the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the 2026/27 financial year.

115. Total recurrent revenue is projected at \$183.32m, reflecting an increase over the revised 2025/26 estimates. This comprises Local Revenue of \$62.36m (34 per cent) and Budgetary Aid of \$120.96m (66 per cent).

The increase in local revenue reflects expected improvements in tax administration, economic activity, and strengthened compliance measures across key revenue streams.

116. Budgetary aid continues to provide critical fiscal support across key areas, including core budget assistance, access, health and education transformation, national security, and private sector development, thereby ensuring stability and continuity in the delivery of essential government services.

117. Expenditure is distributed as follows, according to economic classification:

- **Compensation of Employees** \$84.44M or 46.06 per cent
- **Goods and Services** \$66.23M or 36.13 per cent
- **Interest Payments** \$180,000 or 0.1 per cent
- **Subsidies** \$17.17M or 9.37 per cent
- **Grants** \$8.00M or 4.36 per cent
- **Social Benefits** \$2.84M or 1.55 per cent
- **Other Expenses** \$4.47M or 2.44 per cent

118. Madam Speaker, capital expenditure for 2026/27 is projected at \$162.62m, reflecting continued investment in infrastructure development and national resilience priorities.

119. This brings total expenditure for 2026/27 to \$345.95m.

120. Madam Speaker, the fiscal framework for 2026/27 reflects a commitment to maintaining balance in the recurrent budget while ensuring a strong and sustained level of development expenditure. The Government remains focused on strengthening domestic revenue performance, improving efficiency in public spending, and ensuring that fiscal policy supports long-term economic resilience and growth.

PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT 2026

121. The Capital Investment Programme for 2026/27 Madam Speaker as previously outlined totals \$162,622,500. This includes the continuation of the CIPREG Programme, other FCDO funded projects, legacy EU EDF projects, CDB, ECCB amongst other programmes. This is further broken down into contribution per donor as follows:

- The **UK Government/FCDO** with \$101.86M or 62.64 per cent of the budget
- **EU** with \$39.57m or 24.51 per cent
- **CDB** with \$20.02m or 12.31 per cent
- Other sources (to include **Darwin, OTEP, UNICEF**) \$0.88m or 0.54 per cent

122. The Programme is classified according to five other main headings and their respective contribution to the budget as follows:

- Economic Infrastructure development of \$55.24m or 33.97 per cent
- Social Infrastructure development of \$97.69m or 60.07 per cent
- Public Administration of \$0.21m or 0.13 per cent
- Agriculture of \$0.96m or 0.59 per cent
- Statistical Research, Miscellaneous Projects and Other Programmes of \$8.52m or 5.24 per cent

123. Madam Speaker one may ask what projects are captured in this budget and the benefits on offer. I wish to highlight a few at this time:

- **The new National Hospital** – This project is expected to reach practical completion status this fiscal year and will mark a significant milestone for the people of Montserrat as well as our donor partner. Madam Speaker, we are hoping that we will be able to mark the opening of the hospital, offering the people of this country the restored hope for a better future, demonstrating our commitment to improved health care.
- **The Cultural Centre Redevelopment Project**- This element of the CIPREG programme commenced in December 2025, Madam Speaker, progress achieved to date is remarkable. The commitment of the Project managers (locals), the contractors (locals) and the Ministries involved as well as the support from the Programme Board, Cabinet and the Steering Committee helped to accelerate work. A clear demonstration that we can achieve great things when we work together. This project will be completed within the next few months and we will have a more modern and unique multi-purpose centre, that will house Parliament while offering the public space to hold various meetings, cultural gatherings and activities. The terminal disbursement date was set for March 31st 2026. However, we were able, working with our UK based team were able to get the date extended by two months.

- **The Critical Equipment Programme** embraces the Electricity and Wastewater Infrastructure project and the Green Energy Transition Project. The Ministry of BUILTE will focus on the completion of these projects over the next few months. I am sure Madam Speaker that almost every person on this island has witnessed the ongoing work and dedication by the BUILTE and Montserrat Utilities teams as they work to bring these projects to completion. The benefits of these projects, will continue to be realized for years to come including; (i) the spring rehabilitation work, (ii) reservoir and distribution network and (iii) the waste water treatment component. The terminal disbursement date was set for March 31st 2026. However, we were able, working with our UK based team were able to get the date extended by two months.
- **BIOT Programme** – Montserrat through the Office of the Deputy Governor, continues to work in collaboration with the UK Ministry of Justice to deliver this programme. This is achieved through the Integrated Security Fund, to strengthen the prison’s operational capacity and its ability to meet international standards for humane treatment, prisoner activity, and rehabilitation.
The Programme will see further implementation throughout the Overseas Countries and Territories into the foreseeable future.
- **Housing Construction and Rehabilitation** – The Ministry of Agriculture continues to work with the community to ensure the safety of homes through improvement works and providing opportunities for first time home owners. We constructed a suite of four one-bedroom units in Drummonds within the stipulated terminal disbursement date of March 31st 2026.
- **SEND Programme** – The funds earmarked for the development of a Special Education Needs Unit will roll out a set of activities targeting the mental, social and emotional development of children with special needs across the island. This will allow for the timely intervention of key professionals and critical learning equipment and materials, as we believe Madam Speaker, that the development of a nation rests largely on the capability of its people.

This is why we work to ensure that the relevant resources are available for the better development of the citizens of this island.

124. Madam Speaker, one may consider the fact that we have not informed about the specifics of new Capital Investments for this year, however we will continue to be very prudent in how we utilize limited available funding to ensure that any investment made through capital projects is not only completed but remain sustainable for years to come. Additionally, the limited human resources available to the private sector especially in the construction sector can only be stretched this far, especially considering that we are now completing projects that in some cases have been on the book for years.

125. This approach is found favourable to our funding partners, and I am pleased to say that the UK Government through FCDO has committed an uplift to our Capital Programme of up to an amount of £15M equivalent to approximately \$50M per year for the next two years, once the relevant business cases are developed and approved and a similar amount for this fiscal year.

ALLOCATION ACROSS MINISTRIES AND PROGRAMMES

126. Madam Speaker, the 2026/27 Budget continues to reflect Government's commitment to strengthening fiscal sustainability while ensuring the effective delivery of public services.

127. Complementing this, the Capital Budget is directed toward financing critical infrastructure, asset development, and strategic investments that support long-term economic growth and national resilience. Together, these allocations ensure that our government not only meets its immediate obligations but also advances key development priorities for the future.

128. Madam Speaker, the approved Estimates are distributed across Ministries and key service areas as outlined below:

- The Royal Montserrat Police Service is provided with a total recurrent allocation of EC\$10.56m to support national security and law enforcement operations.
- The Office of the Deputy Governor is allocated a total of EC\$44.80m, comprising EC\$39.74m in recurrent expenditure (88.70 per cent) and EC\$5.06m in capital investment (11.30 per cent).
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management receives EC\$75.20m, with EC\$42.89m for recurrent activities (57.03 per cent) and EC\$32.31m for capital programmes (42.97 per cent) the funds being managed through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.
- The Ministry of Health and Social Services is allocated EC\$96.82m, including EC\$26.39m in recurrent spending (27.26 per cent) and EC\$70.43m in capital investment (72.74 per cent), reflecting ongoing transformation in the health sector.
- The Office of the Premier will receive EC\$16.21m, made up of EC\$15.95m in recurrent funding (98.39 per cent) and EC\$0.26m in capital expenditure (1.61 per cent).
- The Ministry of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour and Transportation is assigned EC\$65.48m, with EC\$14.57m for recurrent operations (22.25 per cent) and EC\$50.91m directed toward capital projects (77.75 per cent).
- The Ministry of Education is allocated EC\$11.40m, of which EC\$10.82m in recurrent expenditure (94.92 per cent) and EC\$0.58m in capital investment (5.08 per cent).
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing, the Environment, Youth Affairs and Sports will receive EC\$11.83m on, of which EC\$9.30m supports recurrent activities (78.62 per cent) and EC\$2.53m (21.38 per cent) funds capital initiatives.

- The remaining EC\$13.64m, representing 3.94 per cent of the total budget, is distributed among other essential Government services. These include the Legislative and Judicial branches, the Office of the Auditor General, the Cabinet Secretariat, Financial Intelligence Unit and the Department of Communications and Digital Transformation.

129. For clarity and ease of consultation, the complete breakdown of allocations is set out in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure laid before this Honourable House.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

130. Madam Speaker, the thousands of persons listening to me today probably will all ask the same question- What does it mean for us. I am happy to share a few thoughts. This budget means:

1. More employment opportunities in construction and related fields because of our capital programmes
2. Higher levels of wellness because of the more regular availability of fresh food
3. Opportunities to invest in agriculture, fisheries and business initiatives because of our loan programme
4. More comprehensive secondary and tertiary healthcare.
5. A wider range of vocational skill training for our youth including apprenticeships
6. More opportunities for consistent participation in organised sports in a wider range of sporting disciplines
7. An environment that will remain protected to safeguard your health
8. More opportunities to increase small business earnings through a larger number of tourists and other visitors

9. Greater safeguarding of all vulnerable groups especially children and the elderly
10. More choices for all travel with extended airport operations.
11. The high probability that we will eventually have a dependable ferry service
12. Better maintained roads and public buildings
13. More reliable electricity supply through the various capital enhancements.
14. Sewage problem at Lookout fixed permanently
15. Improved support for special educational needs
16. Access to areas South of the Belham- initially for homes and agricultural production
17. Expanded export opportunities
18. An expanded calendar of cultural events
19. Hassle-free arrival and departure passenger processing
20. A focus on controlling non-communicable diseases
21. A focus on reducing childhood obesity
22. A refurbished and more comfortable cultural centre/Legislative facilities.
23. More consistent workplace inspection and safer working conditions
24. Respect for all recognised religions and religious practices
25. A revamped Radio Montserrat with the uncertainty over its future removed
26. Constant high-level scientific monitoring of on-island volcanic activity allowing us to utilize more of the so-called exclusion zone
27. Higher levels of emergency medical care with Medivac arrangements put on an equitable and sustainable footing

131. This is a government that has the courage to take decisions and establish clear policies and strategies. We lost an entire decade which we are recovering. Montserrat will continue to rise through the rebuilding of confidence.

VISION TO ACTION

132. Madam Speaker, this budget impacts the lives of people not as a document but as an accountability mechanism for the implementation of our policy priorities.

I wish to make it clear, that successful implementation does not happen simply because we say it is a good thing to happen, it happens because there is the consistent application of research, analysis and creative thinking to those areas of work which are the purview and responsibility of Government. This Government does not and will not shirk its responsibilities.

However, it is important that in this forum while the world can hear us, that we demonstrate that this Government is committed to implementation by focusing on leadership, governance, fiscal responsibility, management, teamwork, communication and engagement. This approach means that we will do what the Government does well when it is effective, it sets the tone.

133. Let me stress that I do not in this presentation intend to conduct a tutorial in Public Sector Management, however, I have been a Minister of Finance, long enough and often enough to recognise that sometimes some public officers do not see an immediate connection between the Budget and their day-to-day work. I am hoping that by drawing attention to matters such as leadership, fiscal management and team work that the nexus will become clearer and stronger.

134. This approach signifies that we are committed to facing the future with hope, we will not be over ambitious nor pessimistic in our outlook. In that regard, we commit to continuing the process of engagement with our residents and diaspora which has led undeniably to a sense of hope filling our consciousness. As a government we wish to convert this sense of hope into a commitment to action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

135. Madam Speaker, one of the African proverbs that I will share today, says this about gratitude “Look behind you in gratitude, look ahead of you in hope. Look beside you with caution. Look around you in faith.”

I am of the view that the quotation encapsulates perfectly our effort to prepare and present this budget to the Assembly, to our people and to the world. It is important that we express our gratitude to all entities, agencies and individuals that have been involved in researching for, preparing and creating these Estimates and associated rationale and explanation embodied in my statement.

136. It is impossible in a few words to adequately show the debt of gratitude I feel not only as Leader of Government Business but as an individual Minister for the help, support and assistance that has been shown above to enable to me to stand here today and deliver this statement. This comes against the backdrop of me not being able to spend face to face time with all entities in the manner in which I would have wanted to because of a range of commitments.

137. I wish to start off by thanking my colleague Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries and team UA. You started the journey with me in 2024 and you are still here providing the much-needed support.

You have remained within oath and stayed steadfast despite the many challenges we faced over the 18 months which is a testament that you are not here for self but the love you have for this country and the passion to see development.

138. To the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and your team, thank you for your many contributions and debates that you have brought to this Honourable house.

139. To the staff at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management for planning, shaping, researching, compiling and structuring the balanced budget being presented today.

The reliability and consistent dedication to ensuring that the Government's vision and policy initiatives become a reality is commendable to say the least. Also, to staff within the Office of the Premier thank you for standing behind me in my daily pursuits, ensuring that the Office of the Premier is a place where the public's presence is welcomed, where they feel represented. To the other Departments and Units under my portfolio, much thanks and blessings.

140. To the Deputy Governor and staff, my heartfelt gratitude to you for ensuring the public service is empowered and capable of fulfilling the mandate of the Government.

To the Ministries and Departments, you have fulfilled your obligation of providing support not only to your respective Ministers but to Montserrat at large. Thank you for unyielding commitment.

141. On behalf of the government and people we have to say thank you to the UK Government, FCDO and our team Montserrat within the FCDO, Her Excellency the Governor and staff of Governor's Office and last but not least my brother Minister Steve Doughty, because of the generous support of this great team and their assistance in obtaining the required funding in spite of the fiscal challenges which HMG faces we would not have been able to continue to deliver growth and development to the people of Montserrat.

Your continued partnership; championing our cause; prioritising funding and supporting this little beloved country, has allowed us to achieve much in our short time in office. We must also include the other Ministries and Departments within HMG for their generous contributions and support.

142. To all our other funding partners- CDB, ECCB, UNICEF the European Union we extend heartfelt gratitude for your contributions over the years towards the development of Montserrat.

143. Finally, and to the NGOs, State-owned enterprises, the listening audience locally and overseas, I say thank you for being instrumental in the decision-making process. This budget is a representation of the hard work we have put in over the past 18 months. We want you to know that we have heard you through the town hall meetings, discussions, the various social media platforms, radio programmes to include “What’s on Your Mind”, feedback and other key messages brought to the forefront to ensure that Montserrat remains on the move.

CONCLUSION

144. Madam Speaker, as I approach the end of this presentation, I have chosen to make some important closing points.

145. We are a government that believes in both the principles and practices of good governance. We believe in people participation. That is why we have regular townhall and sector stakeholder meetings. Lest we forget, it was this government that brought back “What’s on your mind” to the ZJB airwaves within three months of taking office. We meet people where they are and we, the Ministers, have regular open office days where we listen to the concerns of the people. We believe in equality under the law. That is why we promote the mantra of “One Montserrat”.

We also hold fast to the principle of tolerance and acceptance. We have removed the unintended effects of discrimination by updating our health regulations where all children no matter where they are from are treated equally. We adhere to the principles and practices of Accountability, Transparency and the separation of powers.

146. What that is saying, is that we work by what we campaigned on. We keep our word. This budget is the base of future efforts at implementation of policy priorities.

Implementation needs the kind of consistency, competency and continuity that this government is an exemplar for. Remember what happened to Montserrat where governments failed in those areas. We will not follow them. We will not fail you. Montserrat will continue to benefit. We know that being in government is not a right, it's a responsibility. You the people have given us authority to do things that affect everyone's life. That is why we must remain committed to the development of our infrastructure and our people.

147. The Budget provides the means to access financial, physical and human resources. Let us remember it is in effect a plan for only one year. It is not a medium-term strategy.

What this budget does is to allow us to continue working towards that vision of a restored rebuilt Montserrat that in years ahead will not survive only because of budgetary support. The budget demonstrates our enduring belief in ourselves. All the people of one Montserrat. We believe when we work together and work well, we can deliver the kind of results I have projected under our list of intentions.

148. There is no short cut to development. The pathway is more like taking stairs than it is like riding in an elevator. It is a step-by-step process.

There might be obstacles on the stairs that others left there casually and carelessly that we have to clear away before we move on. But we move onward and upward. We aspire, we climb and we deliver.

149. Yes, despite obstacles and challenges we have delivered.

- We improved air access
- Employment levels are higher
- The new hospital project is on track
- We were given a grant of £5.9M to be spent on capital projects within a 6-month time frame and our people have delivered.
- Our relationship with the diaspora is productive and beneficial
- We tried our best to deliver on the Jetty project and we have not given up.
- We promised a ferry which we were unable to deliver as promised but we have not given up.
- Our standing in the region has been restored.
- Our relationship with FCDO and HMG is good.

150. Madam Speaker, Development is, among other things, a partnership between Government and people. The people keep us accountable through elections.

However, as a government, we need our people to continue partnering with us. Negativity and division are not tools of development.

Making fun of each other or deprecating our country, is not development. Choosing only to highlight what has not been accomplished is not development. Adopting a xenophobic attitude to other residents is not development. Development is not easy but it is doable when there is competence, creativity, innovation and commitment in government and unity among people.

151. Madam Speaker, this budget signals our commitment, creativity, innovativeness, and competence. It is our people who must now show cooperation and unity.

CALL TO ACTION

152. Madam Speaker, this budget presentation is not **Ole Talk**. It is a reasoned, realistic, mature explanation of our government's plans for this new financial year. We want this budget to be seen as a call to Action for all the people of Montserrat at home and abroad. Let us embrace this budget, let us own this budget. The budget is more than an extensive speech.

153. Montserrat can be a better place if each of us makes it a point of duty to answer a voluntary call to do our best for Montserrat. If each of us says this is my Montserrat, I will do what I can to rebuild my Montserrat. The Almighty blessed all of us with talents. Let us put those talents to work in the service of this One Montserrat.

154. I am not suggesting that you do everything voluntarily, that is not only unrealistic it is unreasonable. But ask yourself what can I do to help my community and island that the government will not have to pay for. Can I volunteer to help coach youngsters in their favourite sports?

Can I teach another youngster how to play a musical instrument without asking the parents to pay? Am I willing to give a talk at the Secondary School to help to prepare the school leavers for the world of work?

Am I willing to become part of the coaching team for the debating society? Can I visit the elderly and shut ins even just to chat with them, listen to their stories.

155. We don't need special qualifications to put our garbage in bins. We don't need special qualifications to clean up our beaches. We don't need a certificate from a university to teach us to keep our goats and sheep under control.

We don't need a doctorate to donate a cricket bat to a talented youngster. Do we need specialist training to purchase local vegetables, of course not. We can take personal responsibility for doing more physical exercise and eating fresh food. We don't need the Government to tell us that. And in that way, the Government will have to pay a lot less money to fight none communicable diseases that can be so costly to both you and the Government.

156. You can decide to be more punctual at work. You can decide to do less clock watching at 4pm. If you are the head of the department or chief executive, you can decide to review, revise and update your strategic plan, you do not need the Cabinet to tell you that. This budget I repeat, is a call to action for all of the people of Montserrat.

Let your faith, patriotism, and sense of pride in our Montserratian heritage, remind you of what President John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address 1961. It has resonated for decades. "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country". Let us heed that call.

157. I close with this Ethiopian proverb: When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. Yes, Montserrat is small but to borrow an expression from our Jamaican brothers and sisters **We likkle but we TALLAWAH**

158. **Blessings on Montserrat, Blessings to one and all.**

APPENDIX I: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATS	Agricultural Transformation Strategy
BIOT	British Indian Ocean Territory Programme
BUILTE	Ministry of Buildings, Utilities, Infrastructure, Labour and Transportation
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CESI	Community Environmental Sustainability Initiative
CIP	Capital Investment Programme
CIPREG	Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth
DITES	Department of Information Technology and E-Government Services
ECCB	Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
ECCU	Eastern Caribbean Currency Union
EC\$ / XCD	Eastern Caribbean Dollar
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HR	Human Resources
HYPE	Helping Youth Prepare for Employment
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

Abbreviation	Meaning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KW / MW	Kilowatt / Megawatt
MGUKO	Montserrat Government UK Office
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OTEP	Overseas Territories Environment Programme
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PRIME	Produced in Montserrat Expo
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SOLAS	Safety of Life at Sea
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
UK	United Kingdom
UK Youth Parliament	United Kingdom Youth Parliament
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
US\$	United States Dollar
ZJB	Radio Montserrat (Government Broadcasting Service)