

The Anguilla House of Assembly Office of the Speaker



Atlin Noraldo Harrigan O.B.E. Parliamentary Building
P.O. Box 60
The Valley, Anguilla

22nd March, 2021

STATEMENT

Introduction of, A Bill for Goods and Services Tax Act, 2021

Good day to everyone.

Over the past weeks, I have been contacted by several persons in the community, who are concerned by the pending introduction of the “Bill for Goods and Services Tax Act, 2021” or GST in the Assembly on March 23rd, 2021.

They have made several requests of me (as Speaker), including that I **not** allow for the First Reading of this Bill to take place. I have also received indications that Members of the public intend to come to the Assembly to voice their displeasure with the introduction of the said bill, and that there is a petition in circulation that gives voice to these concerns.

This statement seeks to address those concerns, as well as to ensure that **everyone** understands **and** appreciates the legislative process.

Let me begin by saying that, the only provision within the Anguilla Constitution or the Legislative Assembly Rules that allow me (as Speaker) to prevent the introduction of a Bill to the Assembly is found in section 55. (2) (a) of the Constitution where it states,

“(2) Except on the recommendation of the Governor, the Assembly shall not—

(a) proceed upon any Bill (including any amendment to a Bill) which in the opinion of the person presiding in the Assembly, makes provision for imposing or increasing any tax, for imposing or increasing any charge on the revenues or other funds of Anguilla or for altering any such charge otherwise than by reducing it or for compounding or remitting any debt due to Anguilla;”

This Bill clearly fits the criteria, as it makes provision for the imposition of a tax; though the only way that the Bill can be ruled out of order is if H.E. the Governor has not approved its introduction to the Assembly. This is not the case; Her Excellency the Governor on recommendation of Executive Council in EX MIN 21/108 issued on March 17th, 2021 has directed that the Bill be prepared *“for tabling at the next session of the House of Assembly for its first reading.”*

For the sake of clarity, on Tuesday March 23rd at 10:00am, there will be the first readings of four bills including the Bill for Goods and Services Tax, 2021 (GST). These are:

- A Bill for Recording of Court Proceedings (Amendment) Act, 2021;
- A Bill for, Resort Residence Annual Levy, Act, 2021; and,
- A Bill for, Child Justice Act, 2021.

The Business Paper for the meeting is posted on www.gov.ai as well as the House of Assembly’s Facebook Page.

The first reading is the initial stage of the Bill’s passage through the House. Generally, it is a formality, and takes place without debate. At the first reading, the long title of the Bill is read and the Bill is published for all Members and the public, as a document of the House. The next stage is the second reading, where Members are given an opportunity to debate the general principles and merits of the Bill.

I have met and spoken with the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition and I give my commitment to you that on Tuesday 23rd March, 2021; the Assembly will not proceed beyond the first reading of the Bill. I note that Government has committed to public consultation on the Bill and that consultation is ongoing. At present, no date has been set for the second reading of the Bill.

As a matter of principle, all meetings of the Anguilla House of Assembly are open to the public. On Tuesday March 23rd all members of the public are invited to view the proceedings of the House. You are asked to note, that normal capacity in the public gallery is limited to sixty persons and in the interest of public safety and to maintain order, it is not advisable to accommodate more than that number. Note that the proceedings of the Assembly will be available live as usual on Radio Anguilla, the Government of Anguilla's YouTube and Facebook Pages and the House of Assembly's Facebook Page.

You are also asked to note that the High Court and the Magistrates Court will sit on Tuesday; you are being asked to be considerate of this as you enter the Assembly. Also, note that it is customary when the High Court is in session, that barriers for the regulation of traffic are erected around the building, however this is in no way an effort to restrict public access to the Assembly.

The House of Assembly belongs to the people of Anguilla. Our forbearers fought to ensure the establishment of a House of Assembly in Anguilla, where Anguillians are empowered to make laws for Anguilla in Anguilla. The House of Assembly that stands today, flaws and all, is a testament to that struggle. I am imploring all to respect that legacy and maintain at all times the dignity of the House.

All members of the Assembly and myself, respect the right of the people to make their concerns known and to peaceful protest. The Anguilla House of Assembly is the collective voice of the people of Anguilla and there exist, within the legislative process, various mechanisms, whereby members of the public can lodge their concerns, including the presentation of petitions in a peaceful and civil manner.

I am committed through my good offices to facilitate this process, if the public is so desirous. I am therefore asking persons who are utilizing this avenue, to contact the Clerk of the Assembly at lenox.proctor@gov.ai or telephone 497-5081.

As our nation continues to grow and we chart our collective future, I ask God's guidance and blessings on us all.

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