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<b>PRESS RELEASE</b>
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**Motion on the Video Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.**

Mr Speaker,

This Parliament has changed massively since we were elected on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and it is important to understand what those changes have been to date and how they have come about.

First of all, as I have previously referred to the House at the Ceremonial Opening, we established that the address of His Excellency the Governor on a Ceremonial Opening should be dealt with in the style of the address by Her Majesty at a State Opening of Parliament, that is to say, as a speech that reflects the political programme that the people have elected in the General Election that precedes the creation of a new Parliament.

For the reason I set out in my first address to this House as Chief Minister, that was, in our view, a huge step forward and exactly as it should be in an emancipated environment where the Crown in Parliament gives effect to the will of the people.

At that Ceremonial Opening I indicated that we were also ready to start the process of making other changes to the day to day workings of this Parliament.

We have already introduced, very successfully, the practice of publishing legislation as “Command Papers”. That practice now allows for wider consultation on all new areas of legislation even before such legislation is published as a Bill.

In the fourteen short months since we assumed office we have consulted with the Opposition, drafted terms of reference for an Independent Commission on Democratic, Political and Electoral Reform, we have established that Commission under your Chairmanship; the Commission has held meetings, deliberated and reported; last month I provided copies to the members of this house and this month I have tabled the Report so that the public can have access to your findings.

And perhaps the biggest revolution that this Community has seen in its democracy under my leadership of this House has been my convening of monthly meetings of this Parliament.

That has truly, in my view, delivered real democracy to our Community in the increased questioning and debating that delivers.

There is now a wifi network for members and journalists available in this House. Moreover, we now publish a Parliamentary Timetable so that members opposite, the press and the public now know when particular questions and matters are to be dealt with.

That Mr Speaker is a massive change from when we were in Opposition and we were not even told when we might adjourn to.

I worry that this is sometimes taken for granted and I am being asked about timetabling – when in fact the timetable is already published by the House.

All of that helps, in our view, Mr Speaker nonetheless to open up the business and processes of this House to the general public.

The culmination of that approach that we have taken to the opening up of our Parliament is the advent, finally, if the house approves it of video broadcasting of the proceedings of the House.

I said, also during the Ceremonial Opening, barely 14 months ago, that I hoped the cameras that were in the House then, to film that event, would not disappear for the rest of the lifetime of this Parliament.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Hon Members will recall that in our policy paper in Parliamentary Reform, we had already stated before the election that:

*“A GSLP Liberal Government would therefore immediately after the election start the process of holding monthly meetings of Parliament for questions, legislation, government and opposition motions. This in itself would very probably require that the post of Speaker should become full time and that there should be a Deputy Speaker appointed (including such additional support staff as may be necessary).”*

*In addition a Parliamentary Timetable would be published on the first Parliamentary day of each month so that the public and MPs would know when items would be coming up for debate.*

*There also clearly needs to be a Parliament website, independent of the government's website, where all debates would be broadcast live on-line and archived. The proceedings of the House should also be televised on GBC TV or the Corporation's own website, on the basis of consultation with the Corporation. The website would contain copies of Hansard plus parliamentary questions and answers."*

I am very happy, Mr Speaker, to say that the issue of a video broadcasting of the proceedings of this House has long been a personal desire of mine in the process of opening up Parliament to take it closer to our people.

In the first Budget Session of the House in which I had the honour to speak, in 2004, I took that the view then that:

*"There also clearly needs to be a Parliament website, independent of the government's website, where all debates would be broadcast live and archived. The proceedings of the House should also be televised on GBC TV. We already do more than other territories which only offer highlights of their Parliaments but we must not consider that enough. If GBC is to feature a blank screen or a three hour loop of repeats during the day, we can use that time when we are on in this House, to reach out to the people who put us here. In my personal view, we should assess the cost of televising the proceedings of this House and debate seriously whether we want to go down that road. And this is not a partisan issue because I am conscious that I am echoing the Hon Mr Azopardi's words in 2003, in what was his last budget speech, and I may not be speaking to the preference of everyone on the then Opposition*

*benches. In fact, I think this may be an issue where the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House actually find themselves in agreement.*

*This House must reach out through the media to its masters in the population. Not just at election times. We must make better facilities available here for members of the press, and we must not scrimp and save on that. It is too important.*

That was in 2004.

I recognised then and I recognise now that the Hon Keith Azopardi QC had already raised the issue the previous year in his final Budget Address to this House in 2003 when he was Deputy Chief Minister. He had then said this:

*"One looks at the public gallery and there are not many people that come to this House and it should concern Members that that is the case, it certainly concerns me because this House should be in touch with the people and the people should be in touch with this House. The people elected the Members of this House and we need to encourage participation in the affairs of this House and we need to ensure that we communicate and transmit public information to the people and I am concerned that there is a level of disinterest that has to do with the working practices of this House and I believe that we should take an opportunity to review the working practices of the House to make sure that we reach the people much more. It is a question of restructuring timings, of sittings, restructuring the way Question Time is set up and need I say also my personal view is yes, perhaps we should debate whether we should televise part of the proceedings of this House."*

That's the end of the quote.

Neither he nor I had found favour with the then Leader of the House. I was left to continue to press the issue.

During the course of the Budget Debate in 2006 I pursued the matter further stating:

*'...we as a Parliament should very seriously consider the broadcasting of the proceedings of this House. Indeed, when I say broadcasting I mean video broadcasting. In order to stimulate debate on the issue I am considering moving a motion at the next meeting of this House on the issue. Even if only for a few news report snippets or some appropriate 'specials', or live daytime transmissions when the House sits. My views are firmly in favour of clearing out the cobwebs and allowing in the cameras. I am speaking for myself in this respect. Indeed, it is now over 20 years since video killed the radio star, everywhere except in this House. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that we are now probably the only European democracy that bars television cameras from showing our constituents our faces whilst we argue or agree. Voters are limited to judging our temperaments from interviews but are prevented from seeing our interactions in this heart of our democracy. No wonder we are left alone to our debate. Let us face it, these days if it is not worth televising it cannot be worth watching live. Indeed, even for this debate, even for the 'plato fuerte' of the Chief Minister's Budget address and the Leader of the Opposition's reply, we have been joined almost by no member of the public. I believe that we as a Parliament must reach out collectively to our community and we cannot do that without allowing the cameras into our Chamber.'*

That's the end of that quote.

Mr Speaker, I would be delighted to take the House through some more of my Budget interventions – but I think what I have already stated illustrates sufficiently the fact that this

has been an issue I have personally pursuing for all the years that I have been in this House.

Hon Members will know that your own commission's Report has been clear and positive on the issue of televising of parliamentary proceedings.

In paragraph 2 – 13 the Commission has set out the following:

*We have considered whether sittings of Parliament, or any part of them, should be televised. There has been broad support from responders for the televising of proceedings. We have concluded that the sittings of Parliament should be televised but not the proceedings of standing or select committees.*

#### *Recommendation 17*

*We recommend that consideration should be given to televising the proceedings of Parliament and we further recommend that in the event of a privatisation of the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation, the arrangements for the televising of parliamentary proceedings should be guaranteed.*

In fact, Mr Speaker, let me just point out that there is no question in the plans announced by Government, that there might be any privatisation of GBC. That is not at all what our plans for the creation of a subsidiary of GBC (Gibraltar Entertainment Network) amount to.

Perhaps most interestingly, Mr Speaker, is the remark the Commission has set out that there is broad support from responders for the televising of proceedings.

I had always considered that would be the case amongst the majority in our community.

The fact is that although there may not be many people who enjoy watching BBC Parliament quite as much as I do, and I am sure all other Members do too, most of our community are now used to seeing excerpts of interventions by Party Leaders and other relevant Parliamentarians on the daily news.

There is therefore no doubt in my mind that the majority of our community are looking forward to being able to see the workings of this place in glorious Technicolor when relevant and not just on Ceremonial occasions.

So Mr Speaker, against that background, we are shortly to be in a position to deliver video broadcasting of this House as part of the installation of high quality video cameras during the refurbishment of this House which we are about to undertake.

The concept that the Government's IT department has recommended, having considered a number of different options, is one which involves installation of three HD Cameras. Two will be on opposite sides of the Chamber and will be able to show each side. These cameras will be installed as unobtrusively as possible within the furniture that is being installed as a result of the refurbishment. Another, the third, camera, will be installed in the area of the gallery in order to show Mr Speaker and a wide shot of the whole of the Chamber. Zooming in will also be possible depending on manual operation or previously fixed default options.

In the same way that the cameras will be integrated into the furniture – so will the new microphones be. The microphones will operate the cameras to the extent that the shot will change based on which mikes are on.



The system will work initially on the basis that the camera will show the side of the House on which a person is speaking.

If mikes are on both sides at any one time, the shot will move to the shot from the public gallery which covers the whole Chamber and Mr Speaker.

The “raw” feed should, in our view, be available on the Parliament’s own website - [www.parliament.gi](http://www.parliament.gi) . The said “raw” feed will be made available also to GBC and any other journalistic entity recognised by the Parliament. In the Government’s view it should nonetheless be Parliament that retains the copyright in all images and sound as I believe is the case today in respect of our audio feed.

I understand that GBC have already started to consider with the Government’s own IT department how to take the best quality feed from here. I further understand that it is proposed that GBC be provided with a fibre link so that they have the best possible quality feed. They may wish to transmit live when they have nothing else on their schedules – i.e. before 19.30 hrs – or they may simply wish to put it on their website also. Those, Mr Speaker, I consider are matters for the GBC to determine at this moment. Because it is a public service broadcaster, I have little doubt that the public will likely expect they will carry the feed at times when they are not otherwise transmitting scheduled programmes.

Other journalistic entities may also wish to carry the live feed – the Chronicle, Panorama, New People or Vox all have websites which they may wish to have this “raw” feed. The Parliament should not deprive any such entity of the feed.

So, Mr Speaker, that deals with how we will film the proceedings and how the signal will be shared with the public by Parliament and more particularly with broadcasters and journalists.

How to regulate the use of these images is a matter of some complexity. These are already rules in place in respect of the Westminster Parliament. I can see there is a lot there we do not need to concern ourselves with as it covers filming of committees, Westminster Hall debates and the like.

I am grateful to you for having provided that information, Mr Speaker.

We can derive some guidance on the subject of broadcasting of debates in the main Lords and Commons Chambers and the rules that apply there and which I think are very useful.

There are actually rules of coverage at Westminster that seem very helpful in setting some parameters on how the images should be framed etc.

I am going to propose that we should adopt some parts of those rules at the next sitting by way of another motion that I hope will be the subject of agreement across the floor before it is put.

We cannot, however, do that exercise until we have cameras up and can define the angles of coverage properly.

For example, it may not be possible to insist on a “head and shoulders” shot in some instances – but from what I have seen we will be able to frame some rule around the Westminster models.

Also, we need to remember that in this Chamber we also do some of our work sitting down in Committee stage, especially at budget time and that may require some amendment to the angles of cameras (manually) at times and the ushers may have to assist.

There therefore remains a lot of technical work to be done which will require input from the contractor and the IT department. That work will have to start in late April when the main refurbishment works in this Parliament will have been completed, according to the timetable, and the technical adjustment work can start in earnest.

Mr Speaker, we are on the cusp of a transformational moment for our community and our Parliament.

This is a hugely exciting time for our community.

The democratic leadership we are providing is opening up this place to everyone in every way.

Whether it be timetabling the things that happen here so people can tune in, or opening this place up by making it truly accessible as we have said we will in the second phase of the refurbishment – this Government is opening up Parliament and that is better democracy.

As we do that Mr Speaker, I trust we shall be able to count on the support of Members on the other side of the House, despite members opposite having previously not necessarily been in favour of allowing cameras into this place.

There is no need to exclude cameras in our view.

There is no need for us to remain a Parliament that transmits only by audio, by medium wave with an almost constant interference.

There is no need to stay stuck in the past if technology can bring us closer to our people.

And perhaps, with the advent of video, all Hon Members may also – at the times when temper flare – have some thought for moderation as we will be seen by all those who wish to tune in.

Mr Speaker, for all of those reasons, I have great pleasure in commending the terms of this motion to the House.