

## **FRIDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2009**

The Speaker, Hon Clement Kengava took the Chair at 10.04 am.

Prayers.

### **ATTENDANCE**

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Planning & Aid Coordination; Justice and Legal Affairs; Rural Development & Indigenous Affairs, Foreign Affairs & External Trade; National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace; Environment, Conservation & Meteorology; Communication & Civil Aviation; Finance & Treasury; Agriculture & Livestock Development, Forestry, Education & Human Resources, and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona; Central Makira; East Are Are, Temotu Pele, Central Honiara, West Are Are, Lau/Mbaelelea, East Makira, Temotu Vattu, North Guadalcanal, North West Guadalcanal.

## **STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

### **MOTIONS**

**Mr. TOSIKA:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, 'that the government urgently acts to address the crisis in the management and administration of land in Honiara, including:-

1. ensuring the Ministry of Lands provides an equitable, transparent, effective and corruption resistant system of land management that addresses;
  - (a) the shortage of available land
  - (b) the inappropriate allocation of land
  - (c) the ineffective systems of registration, management and revenue collection
  - (d) the issues causing conflict and disharmony in communities in Honiara and throughout Guadalcanal province.

2. Ensuring that the systems in place respect the rights and needs of Solomon Islands.
3. Providing resources and technical assistance to the Ministry of Lands to address land management issues such as:-
  - (a) The need to acquire and subdivide undeveloped Fixed Term Estates such as those in Tandai, West Honiara, and where approved make them available to citizens who have had long term residency on those lands.
  - (b) The need to expeditiously process all outstanding applications by current Temporary Occupation License holders for Fixed Term Estates within Solomon Islands and other urban centres.
  - (c) The lack of appropriate town planning resulting in the unlawful development and use of easements and water and electricity utilities.
  - (d) The introduction of independent and impartial tender processes within the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I humbly voice and submit the cries of many Solomon Islanders who made Honiara as their home and who has for long had tried tirelessly to acquire the piece of land they are now living on, on temporary basis for commonly known as TOL. These people Mr. Speaker, like many of us also need decent standard of living and it would be careless for us leaders for not recognizing and consider their very deep need in life or their true request.

Land as we know, Mr. Speaker, is the centre of all human existence and it is vital for all living souls in Solomon Islands. These people however, are the very people whom the country and the government need to look after. Furthermore, the net effect of economic development and the result of a population influx to cultivate and harvest this economic potential will need our attention now on where to accommodate them.

Economist device the factors of production as land, labor and capital and their combination will vary where investment is applied. In other words, Mr Speaker, these people provide labour force for private business and even the government. They help promote the economy of this country. Honiara city and other urban centres are becoming meeting ports of production and people, which definitely cannot be controlled because people are the production component of any potential development for investment.

The government's policy is threefold and one which I want to reiterate is to improve the livelihood of Solomon Islanders. How can we improve their livelihood, and how will the policy intention touches the life of our very own people and the country Mr. Speaker? These are some of the questions that we leaders need to ask ourselves and reason for our people. More so, the aims and purpose of the CNURA government is, and I quote: "the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement (CNURA) Government believes that it is only when Solomon Islanders benefit from development that the government can say truly that it is addressing our national needs. In other words, we the people should be the center of development. Whatever form development takes the CNURA will ensure that our people remain our central focus in terms of its aims and purposes." End of quote.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, most prime sites for investment and residence in Honiara are given to foreigners who have their investment in other countries and use Solomon Islands as their harvesting cornfield. The economic activities in Solomon Islands support the bigger economies because opportunities are not equally given to Solomon Islanders to participate. If there is one thing we need to do for our people, and to fulfill the good policy intention, it is this motion. No politicking, our people need our helping hands, hands of care, hands of love, and hands of rescue. The time is right and prudent to do this for our very own people. Let this parliament liberates our people from social injustice that hangs and hovers over our country and its people.

Mr Speaker, it is not good for our own citizens to be refugees in their own country or homeless in their own land. A least a family has a piece of land where they can build their houses and call it home to them where they can look after their families and where their future is secured and safe.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why I bring this motion to Parliament is to seek Parliament's resolution to the needs of Tandai residents whom an eviction order was given to them. I know what law is like, Mr. Speaker, but if law is causing trouble and pain to its own people then what an injustice. A letter was copied to the government on this issue. An honorable thing for this company to do is to surrender this land to the Lands Division and the government refunds the company's money in order for peace and harmony to exist once more.

Expensive this maybe, the government will have to painfully accept that this is the price we have to pay for ignoring the normal processes of acquiring land in Honiara or other urban centers, the Land Tender Process. Since the

process was suspended sometimes in the late 1980s and early '90's, the Commissioner of Lands has experienced little or no control at all in the allocation of land areas. Hence it becomes obvious this was the error which saw the allocation of mass piece of land to individual companies and even foreigners. This being so, we have now seen undeveloped mass piece of land in various areas in Honiara and the process of registration becoming more of a process of securing land rather than a prerequisite for development. At this juncture, I would like to assure this honorable Chamber that the whole good intention of this paper is not to seek extension of the city boundary but rather use what is within the city boundary for the satisfaction and benefit of all its inhabitants.

I praise the CNURA Government's principles A & G. (A) for acknowledging the sovereignty of God Almighty and depends on the lordship of Jesus Christ for guidance and blessing now and until the Second Advent. I got this from your policy statement, Mr. Speaker, and as I have said I praised the government for taking that role.

(G) – respects human dignity and uphold the principle for equality, social justice and sharing cost benefits of the development of our resources.

Premised on these aims, purposes and principles are said, I plead on behalf of the have not's and the marginal, to say the least, the grassroots and the poor people of this country who are living on TOL land and those at Tandai land.

Sir, let us give our people life and prosperity by giving these lands to them. Money is something that comes and goes, but life is more precious to Christ our Savior and that is why He died for our sins. I will explain the parable in Luke 12: 42. Luke 12:42 tells the story of a woman who came to the temple and gave two cents and a rich man came along and offered a lot of money. And Jesus said asked His disciples, which one of these two offers much. The disciples said it is the rich man who offers more money. Then Jesus said, no, it is the old poor woman who has given more because she gave her two cents and she gave it from her heart, and that is all the money she has. But the rich man still has more money left and only gave a little. In the same way, those people owning land in Honiara have many pieces of land apart from this land that people of Solomon Islands are living on now. And the land that people are living on now where an eviction order was made on is the only piece of land given to these Solomon Islanders; it is only one piece of land. Who is in need here? These are the very people who are in need of land. That is why I said there are a lot of people using Solomon Islands as their harvesting cornfield. This is what it means in Luke 12:42. And it goes further to say, "What doeth it profits a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own life?" Life is important; it is worth more than

gold and silver. Are we going to neglect the many lives that are in trouble and in need of our help, may I ask Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Tandai are not only from one ethnic group but are from most provinces throughout the country. They are from Temotu, Renbel, Makira, Isabel, Malaita, Western and Guadalcanal. These people are neither stranger or foreigners but indigenous Solomon Islanders and citizens of the nation by birth and right and therefore their request ought to be considered.

Tandai Land has been a home to many of the families for the last 15 to 20 years. This is where they have been striving to earn a living. It is from there that they send their children to school to obtain further education in an effort to secure them a successful future and better citizens of Solomon Islands. These people are working for the government and the private sectors.

People's behavior at times is unpredictable. An evidence of that fact can be seen when the country has gone through the ethnic tension period and the rioting. The country, as everyone knows, is still repairing from its past losses and probably that had partly been a result of responsible leaders not taking matters into serious consideration, more especially when affecting human lives basic needs and their cries unheard.

Mr. Speaker, I plead with all sincerity to this honorable Chamber to make all effort to avoid a possible repetition of similar chaotic situation in our country and communities. This is not undermining the good work of the police or policing, but rather learning from our past history to enable a better solution for lasting peace and prosperity for our country and its people. I strongly believe in the government's commitment of upholding law and advocate justice over its own people, and on that notion it is a matter affecting indigenous Solomon Islands families should be of highest recognition and consideration by us political leaders and relevant authorities concerned, like the Commissioner of Lands. An eviction order would not be a better solution as the families concerned would be desperate and homeless and caused a negative perception to the government who ought to be dispensing care and protection over its own people.

Let me conclude by putting some facts. Mr. Speaker, Honiara has a dead load of approximately 55,000 people and approximately 25,000 seasonal visitors. The total area of the city is approximately about 2,300 hectares, which is approximately 22.7sqkm. A conviction that if the government through the relevant department can use these lands properly will have land for every family in Honiara, given a decent dwelling house to be 80 – 100sqmeters we have 1,000 hectares of land will accommodate 10,000 homes, which in my opinion will be enough to accommodate every family in Honiara.

The current situation on the ground reveals that the land allocation in Honiara is somewhat in the style which will definitely leave people in Honiara landless hence homeless. This is a scenario in 20 years from now unless the government is willing to pay enough attention from now on the issues.

Finally, this motion is intended to address the have-nots and to seek direction and government initiative as to how to improve the land situation in urban centres and more so in Honiara. The terminology 'squatter', 'illegal settlers' and the likes are more meaningful when used in customary land, provincial areas by other provinces or the likes, but Honiara is the home of Honiarans and those terminologies clearly depicts the failure of government to address the issue. The term also cultivates a negative mentality of Solomon Islands who have been classified hence a disorganized settlement breeds a disorganized community.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is basically to say that if people are not properly allocated land nor given proper share of land, people will argue over land in Honiara if they are continued to be given TOL licenses. We would not even know how many people are living in those areas.

What I am trying to do is to properly demarcate land and give it to the people so that their future is secure and also another reason is that there will not be any other person applying to acquire a fixed term estate on that land because the moment you have a TOL and another person apply and is granted a fixed term estate, you are going to be evicted from the TOL and you will be homeless in your own country, more so they are only our wantoks, every one of us sitting down in here. We make up the composition of this town of Honiara, and when it is properly organized we will have an organized community or organized settlers in the areas who will then give revenue to the government through payment of land rents and land registration. That is the basic idea why we should organize land properly. If we do not do it now when are we going to do it? We will go on talking about it leaving our people desperate and live in insecurity? I think it is high time as I said today that land is given to the people of this country so that they can see the future too on where they are living.

Land is something that makes a future for a person. If land is not properly allocated to our people they will be dissatisfied and they riot and create all this nonsense in our country and this is because we leaders are not looking after our own people.

It is for the unfortunate citizens in this country that I present this unpopular motion. With these sentiments, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*(The motion is open for debate)*

**Hon. Sogavare:** Is there any order here for us to talk or we allow the Minister to speak first.

**Hon. MANETOALI:** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for giving me the opportunity first. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion by the Hon. Leader of Independent Group, the Member of Parliament for West Honiara. Mr. Speaker, the motion has been set out in today's order paper which you have read out as well as the Member for West Honiara hence I need not go through the wordings of the motion.

First and for most, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Leader of the Independent Group for bringing this very important issue before Parliament. On behalf of the government, I would like to assure the House that work is now being stepped up to address the very issues being raised here. I therefore hope that in our debate, we note with equal importance the need for this debate to be opened and contributing proactively to mapping a way forward with regards to solutions and support for the undertaking by the Ministry to address the very issues raised in this motion. I say so because the problems, issues, concerns and challenges that have become prevalent with regards to land administration and management have been problems, issues and concerns that successive governments, including CNURA are well aware of. They are not new but have been long outstanding issues that successive governments were faced with.

Sir, there has not been much in the way of concerted effort to address this nor the political will. In this regard, I wish to inform the House that in the assessment of the CNURA Government, aid assistance that was poured into Lands by our development partners have been too concentrated on technical issues and have not in any way address the administration's chronic problems, capacity building and such very lopsided. This will be rectified.

Sir, having said so, the enormity of this chronic problem its breadth and depth will require a total overhaul of the legislation, the processes and systems that are currently in existence, a task that will take time, commitment and political will. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the government and administration through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey, whilst it may not have the time to complete this work to a level where it can be sustainable, I can assure this House that it has the commitment and the political will to tackle the problem head on and has begun the work.

Sir, the success, of course, will require the commitment and political will of successive governments and administration to maintain and sustain the work that the CNURA Government is now embarking on for the good of the country because of the importance of land to the development, peace, security and

wellbeing of this nation. What reforms are carried out in this sector will have to contribute to nation building, national unity and peace?

Sir, the approach taken is two pronged:

- 1) processes systems etc supported by,
- 2) a parallel program to re-professionalize and reestablish the integrity and reputation of the administration and management of land and that of the Ministry to a level where it is able to sustainably deliver services and implement the priority programs of any government. Sir, land issues have been the biggest barriers to major programs of successive governments including CNURA and policies with regards to decentralization economic development throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the current situation, may I remind all of us that the Lands and Tiles Act 1969, though not perfect and now needing review, has clear guidelines on matters raise herein, but failure of successive governments and administrations to enforce regulations provided in the act and the inadequacies to address the problems of today has over time created huge problems for development and the proper management and administration of crown land and has made customary landowners wary of letting their land available.

Some of these are mentioned in the motion by the hon. Leader of the Independent group. It is important that we, the leaders acknowledged that this situation has not encouraged investors both foreign and national to invest in projects and businesses that could and would diversify the economic base of Solomon Islands to raise the necessary capital to provide the services required by its ever growing population.

Mr. Speaker, you will note that land dealings on most alienated land in Solomon Islands are central to the work of the Department of Lands of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey. The administration of most urban lands has been widely criticized by the urban population and recently was highlighted by the Auditor General's report as riddled with corrupt practices. This comes as no surprise as pressure for urban housing has continued to soar above the ability of the land administrators to meet the demand for land and housing. Without a proactive program by successive administrations to counter the ever increasing demand for urban land, officers working in the Ministry have continued to face the challenge of meeting the urban population's needs. This is not the case as we speak and the Ministry is now embarking on various proactive programs to address this.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note with regard to land that the country's urban population has risen to a level that is becoming and sustainable if not arrested.



As experienced in Honiara, demand for land and Housing has seen squatters sprawling on the outskirts of Honiara overnight. The increase in demand is further exacerbated by the greatly increased rental rates in towns, especially Honiara. This increase of house rentals in Honiara has negatively impacted on the ability of not only civil servants but also investors and businesses to find sustainable land and accommodation. For instance with regards to government alone this area has taken the much needed funds for service delivery. Land reform will be needed both for the crown land and customary land to tackle these issues and the Ministry is working on both fronts.

Sir, land speculation by individuals who are taking advantage of the current situation is also becoming a problem. In other words, individuals spent time applying for a parcel of land and once they are in possession of the title, he/she then sells the parcel for 20 times the amount they bought from the Commissioner back to the government and others. The Land and Titles Act spells out clearly that these individuals are not allowed to resell the land as clearly spelt out in the grant instruments in most cases. To find ways to solve these issues we must not make any more excuses but boldly acknowledge that the administration is at fault when it knowingly or unknowingly went ahead and process the transfer of titles. The problems go on.

The government also relies heavily on the alienated land held by the Commissioner to fast track projects and investors establishment in the country. Without the luxury of having enough alienated land at its disposal, any government of the day will have difficulty in accessing readily available land. Customary land is held by resource owners who do not trust the government and the current system to allow or open up their land for development. Without land there can be no development. It is against this backdrop that the government has given the Law Reform Commission another reference in the task. This is to look into land reform and provide options to the government on the way ahead, either through legislation or governance reforms. The Land Reform Division is established to look into this area and to support the work of the Law Reform Commission.

Sir, with regard to the shortages of land, the Ministry is addressing this step by step working in close collaboration with the Attorney General's Chamber and the Registrar General's office. Through the direct land allocation policy, large areas of crown land have been allocated to individuals and companies and other entities. To date some of these lands have not been developed and left idle. It is the intention of the government to revisit this and where needed to re-enter the land to make it available for development within the time period allowed by law. It is also revisiting the direct allocation policy and working on a policy change with the objective of setting up systems and procedures for land

administration that is affordable and considered in the context of public sector reform and ultimately with the view for encompassing the national land asset for maximum benefit in a very transparent manner.

Mr. Speaker, land administration is the regulatory framework, institutional arrangement, systems and processes that encompass the determination, allocation, administration, and information concerning land. It includes the determination and conditions of approved usage of land, adjudication of rights and registration via titling the recording of land transactions and the estimation of value and taxes based on land and property, including the structures and improvements thereon. It is a very complex task and not an easy one. In relation to this, the government recognizes the importance of land and its administration and management as an economic driver and the source of revenue. Land also occupies a central place in the lives of our people and underpins both our culture and the national economy. In tacking this, the Ministry is looking into ways to avoid such allocation. It is now making an assessment of this land and should be able to come up with options for a way forward. It is important to mention that the Ministry is taking a people centered and holistic approach to address the core issues affecting registered, alienated and customary land with regard to land allocation. This work involves the full utilization of registered land, the opening up of customary land for economic development and the formulation of a responsible and relevant action plan for the solutions of informal settlement. This work will also have positive impact on other areas raised in this motion as all are linked.

Mr. Speaker, the ineffective systems of registration, management and revenue collection. I have dealt with ineffective systems of registration and management. With regards to revenue collection, the ministries revenue collection has now improved and within the next three months, all dues owed to the government will be collected. Those not paying their dues and those who have not fulfilled their part of the conditions in the grant instrument under the fixed term estate will be dealt with under the Land and Titles Act, 1969. The Ministry is working on this and using several approaches to ensure all dues are collected including home delivery of invoices. This is being dealt with in two stages. Stage 1 is to deal with what is now due to the government and the next step will be a site visit to each parcel to ascertain what development is on the land and how many properties or structures to ensure the government gets what it should get and working out a longer term solution to this problem. Furthermore, the schedule prescribed fees which are now more than 30 years are being reviewed with the view to increasing fees to reflect how many resources it cost the government to provide these services. The Ministry is addressing these and working on it. It is also the intention of the Ministry and as per law that any

land not developed in the given time will go through the forfeiture process and any land required for public purpose will also be dealt with under law with the view to making this become available under public tender.

On issues causing conflict and disharmony in communities in Honiara and throughout Guadalcanal Province, the Ministry will be working closely with the Commission of Inquiry into Land Dealings in Guadalcanal on this matter. It is the intention of the government through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey that the findings of this Commission will provide the information needed for policy options for government to consider. With regards to technical assistance, the Ministry is working on the realignment of this assistance to what the Ministry will need. This realignment will be about targeted capability strengthening. It is discussing with willing partners and is requesting an approach where technical experts are carefully selected for their specific knowledge and their understanding of the skills in building capabilities and confidence and professional levels of their counterparts singly or in groups, in particular competencies that have been identified as critical for the future performance of the officer and the Ministry. The officers through this exercise must have confidence in their own capability to work effectively. It is hoped that the government in this instance will be able to obtain a reading or an assessment of the strength and weakness of that assistance from a Solomon Islands' perspective. This will allow us to have a baseline from which to assess the progressive achievement of such assistance and will also allow us to begin to focus an appropriate withdrawal time for technical assistance. This is to avoid what was the experience in the Ministry with regards to technical and aid that was poured into the Ministry so far with little improvement.

Sir, with regard to the undeveloped fix term estates, the Ministry is now going through its records and has embarked on putting together a full list of those individuals or companies that have been granted fix term estate but have not developed this. Once the list is completed, site inspections done, the Ministry will be working closely with the Attorney's General's Chamber and the Registrar of Title with a view to re-entering these undeveloped lands. Once this is done it will then turn its attention to others who have fixed term estate titles and have not developed it and those who may have more than one. Once the data is completed site visits will be done to ascertain what development there is. All these work will be done within the bounds of law and therefore will take time. It is only then that the issue of subdivision raised herein can be done. The Commissioner of Lands can use processes open to it under law such as surrender, forfeiture, process or re-enter, etc for public purpose before it can carry out any actions as alluded to here at all times working within the principles of natural justice to all. Whilst some of these people may have resided in these

areas for a lot time, since the fixed term estate has been given to someone else as present they are squatters.

On the conversion of the Temporary Occupation Licenses to Fixed Term Estate, I am pleased to inform the House that the pilot area for this program has been completed and offer now given to TOL holders. The program is now moving on to other settlements. This work is not without its problems. There are those to whom the offer was made and to date have not responded and those who could not afford to pay and those who have paid and those who are paying installments. So, yes this work although taking a lot time is moving forward now.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to lack of appropriate town and country planning, this is an area that has been neglected and is one that will be the subject of request for technical assistance and is a priority program of the Ministry. As a result of another policy decision in the past but previous government, the division was dismantled and deployed to the provinces and it is only now that it is realized that the foreign advice on this should never have been implemented. The Ministry is addressing this and also a lesson to the country that not all foreign advice is good and should be effective. The onus will be on us to assess advice given.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to independent and parcel tender processes within the Ministry, let me assure the House that one of the options that the Ministry will be looking into is to reintroduce the tendering system with regard to land allocation. The success of this system and one suggested in the motion will be dependent on the successful re-professionalizing of the Ministry's capacity in terms of technical staff resources and funds to allow for town and country planning taking its proper course. It will also require the re-establishment of the Site Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, the broader land reform policy objectives of the work now embarked upon are covered under but not limited to the following and may provide policy options and solutions to the problems at hand:-

1. first establish proper procedures for administration of all public or state owned lands in the country;
2. provide security in customary land tenure,
3. open up customary land for economic development,
4. convert temporary occupation licenses into fixed term estate,
5. ensure maximum economic use of most alienated land,
6. bringing tribes and tribal land into governance for purposes of administering both customary and crown or alienated land,

7. make legislative provisions for the legal recognition of tribal lands and tribes in the manner in which they administer and manage the resources in the tribal communities,
8. make provisions for assessment of titles of tribal lands to tribes and tribes traditional authorities and the legal recognition of these as competent authorities for purposes of administration of the use of tribal land,
9. develop policy guidelines for the return of certain alienated lands to original owners under the resettlement scheme of the original landowners,
10. initiate work on the revision and amendment of the Land and Titles Act to bring it up to date with present changes in the country.

Under these objectives various programs and activities are being mapped out and implemented. This will not be an easy task but one that is now set in motion given the seriousness of the problems to be addressed, including the crisis that the country has gone through with regards to land, its allocations, use, ownership and so on.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honorable Leader of the Independent group for his insights and the motion here raised and assured the House that these issues are being dealt with as we speak. I have every confidence in my Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey under my leadership with the support of my officials that these issues are being addressed.

Mr Speaker, in view of what the government is doing, the motion is really not necessary. The CNURA Government is already addressing this issue and so we will endeavor to help our people to ensure they are taken care of.

Sir, with those I beg to take my seat.

**Hon. TORA:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute briefly on the motion moved by the Honorable Leader of the Independent Group and Member of Parliament for West Honiara that the government urgently acts to address the crisis in the management and administration of land in Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know land is our mother. I repeat land is our mother. Without land there is no development. Without land we cannot live and survive today. Mr. Speaker, God the Almighty created the earth and all living creatures therein including us human beings. Mr. Speaker, we are created in God's likeness and image and gave us the authority to be stewards over his creation. Mr. Speaker, land cannot speak for itself but land is the mother who accommodates all living creatures including us human beings.

Mr. Speaker, during our forefathers' time we cannot hear any land disputes or quarrel over land. But today even brothers are against brothers,

tribes against tribes and even communities against communities. Why is it like that? The answer is on all of us sitting down in here today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the intention of this motion is for the government to urgently act to address the crisis in the management and administration of land in Honiara and also in other urban areas. Mr. Speaker, there are existing laws and legislations that set out procedures for allocation of crown lands, especially in Honiara and also in other urban centres. But today I think you will agree with me that although there are procedures for allocation of lands we can see today only certain people owning many lands inside Honiara and in other urban areas. I am sad to say that those people become richer and richer and others will become poorer and poorer because they do not have any property in Honiara or in urban areas.

I would like to thank our good people of Guadalcanal for accommodating us here. This city of Honiara is where all of us in Solomon Islands come together and live and develop this centre here in Honiara. I am just wondering that the population in Solomon Islands is increasing today and it is up to us, leaders who are sitting down here to make sure there is decentralization of development now before it is too late. We need to share developments with other provinces as well to avoid the kind of problems that we see are happening in Honiara because this city is attracting young people to come in from other provinces. We have already seen that squatting is continuing in our city, and we cannot avoid it because it must happen. But it all depends on us, leaders on how we address this problem of squatting. The answer is on us.

Mr. Speaker, the current system that I see practiced in the Ministry of Lands which is responsible for allocating of lands is very unfair to our people in the country, especially those who want to own a property in Honiara.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the government is also facing housing problem because of the decision of past governments in selling houses. Maybe some of them are still inside this house today and I want them to know what they did in the past is wrong. Why do we have to sell houses? Where are we going to accommodate our employees? Where, Mr. Speaker? Are we going to accommodate them in caves or where?

Sir, I totally disagree with the way land allocation is being practiced by the Ministry responsible. I want my colleague Minister to take note of this. I want to see him taking note of what I am saying. If people are not following regulations, then the only way is very easy, and that is to remove them or ask them to resign because what they are doing is really unfair.

I tried my best to apply for land but every time I was told there is no land available. But when I go around doing my research and my own feasibility studies around here, there are still some vacant lands still there, but next time I

go back, developments have already taken place. I then said to myself that I maybe the wrong person born at the wrong time at the wrong place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honorable mover of this motion for seeing it fit in bringing this motion to this floor of Parliament for us to deliberate on. Some may think this is a political motion but to me it is not, it is a motion that a leader like him with the courage of bringing this motion so that leaders can look at it very seriously in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, to allow other members to contribute to this very important motion, it is very important that they must see in their records that those people who already have lands, the many thousands of acres they already have, should not be given more land but give it to other people so that it is fair to everybody.

We must also look seriously into the intention of this motion, especially our people living in the squatters outside of Honiara. It is very important to have those lands registered and given fixed term. I think this will ease the problems we are encountering today.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I resume my seat. Thank you.

**Mr. AGOVAKA:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to also contribute to this very important motion moved by my colleague Member for West Honiara and Leader of the Independent group.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, if I may go back to history. Before the Second World War, Honiara was occupied by the indigenous people of Guadalcanal. The capital of Solomon Islands then was in Tulagi. It was after the World War in 1945, after the Americans left that the British Administrators decided to move to Honiara because infrastructures left by the Americans were available here. As they moved here they progressively alienate Honiara to become the capital of Solomon Islands. Let us not make any mistake that the land of Honiara belongs to the indigenous people, the landowners of Guadalcanal. It is just like Auki, Lata, Noro, Munda, which are urban areas alienated for the purpose of government development and they still belong to the people that owns them.

Mr. Speaker, if you can remember in 2008 I moved a motion, not only to speak about land issues but perhaps and more so on services needed within the communities of Honiara, in particular the settlements in and around Honiara. My motion was defeated because the government said it has its program in place to deliver the kind of assistance sought in the motion, in particular education, health, water supply, roads etc, etc.

The motion on the floor today moved by my colleague here is about land, and this is an important issue. The people of Honiara have allowed Honiara to become the capital of Solomon Islands, and we are the host of the capital. We are the host of this nation because we host the capital of this nation. We have said,

yes, come and develop because we allowed our land. It is goodwill from the people of Guadalcanal.

My question here is if we have shown that goodwill, where is the goodwill from the other side, from the government, the government that has alienated this land for the purpose of social and economic development in our country. Where is that goodwill? Mr. Speaker, today we have noted that the land of Honiara has not been properly compensated for, and it is therefore my call that the government takes note and provide that goodwill payment to the people and landowners of Honiara. Perhaps, it is maybe right to say too that the people of Auki, Lata, Noro and Gizo too would like to be accorded the same thing, and that is for the government to compensate for acquiring that land for the purpose of social and economical development.

Mr. Speaker, some of the issues raised in this motion has been perhaps addressed by the Minister of Lands who has already spoken in response to the motion here and specified in particular what the government's policy, administration and work that have been carried out. For us, looking on the other side of the coin on this motion, it is important for the Solomon Islands Government to properly address the land of Honiara. We cannot address the land of Honiara if we cannot address the bona fide demands of Guadalcanal. These have to be taken into the whole picture, and not as one unit as opposed to another unit.

What I am saying here is that the land of Honiara with respect to landowners has to be properly compensated. And perhaps if I may add here for the Minister and government to take note, the Prime Minister is here, there should be a legislation that puts a certain percentage levy of all land rentals in Honiara to be given to landowners of Honiara. This is a yardstick that not only Honiara deals with this kind of issue but other provincial headquarters too, for example, Auki, Lata and Noro so that a certain percentage, a levy of all the land rentals in those provincial headquarters should be given back to indigenous landowners of that particular area.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Minister of Lands to take note and in particular the government that when we talk about equality and justice of land distribution, justice to who? Is it justice to the people who come here? What about justice to people who own the land in Honiara. When you talk about equality is it equality to whom. Is it equality to people who come here or is it equality to people own this place?

Mr. Speaker, as national leaders we have to look at this motion at a general view, an eagle's eye so that we will be able to address not only one side of the coin but both sides of the coin. Mr. Speaker, as I have said we have shown our goodwill, we have allowed Honiara to become the capital of Solomon



Islands, we played host to the people of Solomon Islands and now I am asking where is your goodwill to us the people who own Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that we need to address as government and Members of Parliament is decentralization of the economy and social development. When everything is centralized here in Honiara people come to Honiara looking for the bright light. They expect employment, they expect proper education for their children, they want better medical facilities, but what do they find? They find nothing. It is an illusion when it was said that Honiara is the bright light of Solomon Islands only to end up not finding unemployment because there is nothing here for them hence they turn to other things to sustain their livelihood here in Honiara. I feel sorry for the people and as Members of Parliament and as a government we should address these issues. We should not neglect them. They are our people like the Hon. Leader of Independent said. They are our people.

I am calling on the government to seriously look at decentralizing economic and social developments. We should not put all our eggs in Honiara, but let us go down to Noro, Auki, Lata so that people will find something in their provinces to do instead of coming here only to find there is nothing for them here. This is important.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to raise here is the undeveloped lands in Honiara. The Ministry has given lands to people, which is good but it gave so many lands to certain individuals, more land than they needed to build a house or whatever it is they want to build. I think the Ministry and in particular the Minister in consultations with the Commission of Lands to exercise their power to acquire the undeveloped land and redistribute them to people who need land to build houses, make gardens and so on and so forth.

Mr. Speaker in strengthening the Ministry we need to re-look at those administrators. I think some of them have been there too long and have become stale and corrupt because they know the system too much. We should remove such people, and not only remove them but prosecute these corrupt officers. If some of us have gone through prosecution, others too should because all of us under the same law in this country. Nobody is above it.

Sir, I acknowledge what the Minister of Lands has said that it has plans and programs to address these issues, but sometimes when we do plans and we put all these things together, a beautiful system, the guys who implement it are our failures. They have no will power to implement government programs and policies. It is important that I call on the administrators and the Minister to start kicking these people; kick the butts and push them so they do the work the government wants them to do. To do your policies, to do your plans and programs is important. In particular, ministries like the Ministry of Lands, it is

important that those guys working in the administration must adhere to the rule of law and must adhere to the policies and programs of government.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, I am just contributing short contribution, I support my colleague's motion that we should realistically look into this issue and address it for the betterment and future, not only our future but the future of people in generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I would like to say also here is that whilst the Ministry has its plan, where is the plan of the Honiara City Council in regards to land? Whilst the Ministry has its own plans on one side, we do not see the plans of the people administering Honiara. The Honiara City Council and Town and the Country Planning Board must cooperate together so that they are able to manage development and plan of Honiara and land management of Honiara.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think the Commissioner of Lands really needs to exercise its power under the laws of this country before we are okay. If the Commissioner of Lands cannot exercise its power then I am sorry that will power to deliver and to enforce the law will not be there. I hope the Minister of Lands take note of what I am saying because this is a serious matter, and I acknowledge what you said and acknowledge the plans and programs that the government has.

With my brief comments I would like to support this motion. Thank you.

**Hon. TOZAKA:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to contribute very briefly to this motion, a very important motion moved by the Independent Leader and Member of Parliament for West Honiara.

I have just a few points I want to mention here that there are three main stages of land in the country. One is the registered land and customary land, when the colonial government came into power they were trying to address squatter settlements in our urban areas that they introduced (TOL) Temporary Occupation License. Temporary occupation license is a very important tool of government that is trying to address people building houses all over the place, simply because they have problem with government land. They are employed by both the government and the private sector but accommodations provided by both government and the private sector are inadequate and therefore have the problem of finding land to build houses and so they squatter. And this is not something to be scared about because it is common universally; squatter is common in every country throughout the world.

Because of that the colonial government at that time was trying its best to look for ways on how to address squatter settlements. They then came up with a policy that tried to identify sufficient lands through the Lands and Title Act where public services like water supplies, electricity, drainage and roads system

can be put. That is how the temporary occupation system ownership of land was established.

If you are to ask the meaning of what a temporary occupation license is, it says 'temporary' and temporary means not permanent. It means living on a land for a short period of time after which you have to decide whether you can afford to move on to permanent ownership of that place then you have to go through again with a system of land ownership, go back to the Commissioner of Lands and the Commissioner of Lands will allocate the land as registration land. The ownership of the land is registered from temporary occupation to fixed term.

This TOL was also abused too at this time. It went out of hand and you will find that everywhere in Honiara, everywhere you will go, you will find in corners, you will find in spaces small houses springing up. This again is a problem facing the government, facing us on how we can address it. It signals one thing, and that is we need more land in our towns, especially in Honiara. You can also see from this report here that most of our people we find in this temporary occupation licensed in areas like Matariu, Kombito, our people most of whom you will now find has changed this time from the employed to the unemployed. You will find people living there are those who find it hard to find jobs in town and so they live with their wantoks there, and then this temporary occupation license has been abused as well.

My point here about this is that these systems are already set in place and it is for us to re-visit them and see whether they are adequate, and if they are not adequate then we should address them.

The motion is saying 'crises in the management and administration of land'. That is the key word of this motion, 'crises'. Now, the person owning land on behalf of the government is the none other than the Commissioner of Land under the Lands and Titles Act. He is the one owning land, and inside the Lands department as we are all aware, has its staffs, its divisions that are responsible for different divisions, like registration of land, customary land and temporary occupation land, as well as the survey division, etc.

The Land and Titles Act state our rules and our laws on land matters. All of us are aware that if we go and ask for land, and the Commissioner of Lands having gone through the system says there is no land or says a particular piece of land is not allowed to be built upon then it means that is the law, that is the country's law, that is the law guiding the ownership of government land. Therefore, if the Commissioner of Lands tells you not to build something on a piece of land but you continue to build it, then what happens to the Commissioner of Lands? He is just a human being and so is demoralized.

Our experience during the colonial times, when the Commissioner of Lands says you are not allowed to build on this particular land because of these

reasons, everyone honors the decision. But when very important positions like the Commissioner of Lands' position are localized, when they say because of government policy, because the law says not to do this but people go ahead and do it then that really damages the reputation of those who are responsible for the management and administration of land on behalf of government and our people.

I want to make this thing clear, Mr. Speaker, because most of the time we blame our officers, the public officers who are responsible for land. These people are qualified people who were trained and sent overseas to get qualifications and they are the ones responsible in administering our lands. I know because some of us have experienced that when officers try to administer or manage rules and regulations on behalf of the government but those rules are disobeyed, officers feel very demoralized. They feel bad very bad, and they are demoralized to the extent that they give up. And when they give up that is the time we find the crisis happens. Most of the officers in the Lands Department will tell you that that is what is happening if you talk to them.

So what are we going to do? The Minister of Lands has already spoken earlier on clarifying the government's position on land reform. He informed us of a very important land reform his Ministry is trying to address on the administration and management of government land by those responsible, especially the Commissioner of Lands and the lands officers.

I also remember a reform that affected the Lands Department is a reform that was done way back in the 1980's when most of our lands officers and surveyors left their jobs, they were terminated and the Lands Department lost a lot of its officers and today if you go to the Ministry of Lands you will find not many staffs and officers in there. The government now realizes that policies like that introduced in the past were not working well and has tried to go back to addressing the performance of the Lands Department and is performing very well at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that there are some improvements going on at the Lands Department at this time. I am happy that they are now working with every capacity building of the government and they have started to conduct inspections of areas that our people need more development in terms of land and that I know that is being addressed at this point in time.

Sir, I just want to clarify in this motion the importance of administering and management of land that none of us within us has the authority over lands in the Lands and Titles Act except the Commissioner of Lands. And the Commissioner of Lands and his staff need all the support from us, the public and us as leaders to support that division.

In regards to provinces, as far as I know, land has not yet been delegated to anyone in the province but it is still under the Commissioner of Lands, and I think there are talks going on at the moment about the possibility of decentralizing some of the powers of the Commissioner of Lands down to the provinces, so that there is also another Commissioner of Lands too in the provinces. May be that would be another good idea. This would mean we have a commissioner of lands in Honiara and another commissioner of lands in the Western Province in Gizo, a commissioner of Lands in Auki, Kira Kira, Lata and so on. It would be that commissioner of land giving statutory authority so that he would be able to make decisions there and then not having to come back to the Commissioner of Lands in Honiara to give him authority on development of lands in the province. That authority should be given to the Commissioner of Lands representative in the various provinces throughout the country.

Sir, I think those are my contribution to this motion. It is an important motion and as Minister responsible for Public Service, I would like to assure the mover that we are working very closely with the Minister of Lands in making sure the Ministry gets back to its normal operations like before or even better than before. I think one thing we must be happy about is that I think other Pacific Island countries are looking at us on how we are going to develop our land tenure system because we are one of the countries that I think is number two to Papua New Guinea and we still have an upper hand in our land ownership, we still have it. The customary land is still in our hands. We still have time to reorganize ourselves as to how best we would organize ourselves in reforming our landownership for development and looking after our people in our country.

With these comments, Mr. Speaker, I resume my seat.

**Hon. SOFU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to contribute towards this very important motion moved by the Leader of Independent and Member of Parliament for West Honiara.

In so doing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for seeing it fit in moving this motion. I also thank those who have already contributed to this very important motion. I know that very important points were raised in relation to this motion.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Lands who made his speech today raises very important points, in which the present government is trying to address. After the Second World War the capital was relocated from Tulagi to Guadalcanal. The decision made at that time was wrong. It was wrong at that time. If colonies had been established at that time, I think we would have seen urban centres

established in province like this and that, we would not have this problem we are experiencing today.

Mr. Speaker, successive governments have tried their best in addressing the issues raised by the Leader of Independent but it has been very difficult. I would like to thank the Minister of Public Service who has spoken earlier today and said we are going to support the Minister of Lands to address issues raised in this motion.

Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, relevant points have been raised by those who have already spoken on the motion and I have one or two points to add on to this very important motion. Mr. Speaker, the second point of the motion talks about ensuring that the systems in place respect the rights and needs of Solomon Islanders. Mr. Speaker, I know that the Ministry of Lands has a system of allocating lands and even proper management of lands. But it is our attitude that is not good in that when land was allocated to us we resold that land to another person. Many times I heard people saying foreigner, foreigner. It is not the foreigner who is wrong, no, but we are the ones. When a piece of land is allocated to you, the purpose of allocating the land to you is because of your request to the Ministry of Lands.

Mr. Speaker, when you apply for land you mentioned in your application that you want to develop a property and so they respected you by giving you the land but instead you sold that land to another person or to a foreigner. I think there needs to be understanding on our part on this. As we know, land in Honiara, which this motion is talking about cannot be extended any further, it is difficult. The mistake has been there for a long time. My colleague Member of Parliament for West Honiara has seen this mistake and therefore has tried to raise it to our attention. But I think it is too late, it is late because where else can be find any land.

I think sometimes we must blame ourselves too, that we, Solomon Islanders when allocated a piece of land tend to sell it away, giving it to someone and that someone builds a property on that land because he bought that land. He develops it, because he purchased it and so it belongs to him. Maybe he owns three, four or five pieces of land because he bought them from someone who sold them to him. I do not know what the Commissioner of Lands would say about these things. But I know there are rules and regulations there.

My second point is TOL land. I really support the sentiments made by the Member for Central Guadalcanal about squatting on customary land. He is telling the truth because he is a man from Guadalcanal and he must say it. There is need to put the TOL lands right. And I thank the Minister of Lands who mentioned today that they are working on converting TOLs into FTEs. I urge my colleague Minister to please fast track that process so that those people can know

where the boundaries end so that we do not cause another brother or sister or another friend to be angry with us. It is very important for us to know exactly where the demarcation line is.

I want to thank the Ministry of Lands for completing the process of converting TOLs to FTE in some areas. But I just want to urge my good Minister, my hard working Minister for Lands if they can speed up the progress so that people can register their lands and live on them so that we can actually know where boundaries end and which is owned by customary land owners.

My third and final point, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Lands has clearly stated today that there are lands allocated to applicants but were never developed. They are now working on list of under developed lands. Mr. Speaker, again I want to make the call to the Minister of Lands, to seriously look into this. There is provision under the Lands and Titles Act that spells out very clearly that if a land is undeveloped for more than 18 months, the land should be reacquired so that the need by the Member of West Honiara identified is achieved. Give the land to another person who is capable of doing something on it otherwise that person decides to resell the land.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the government for its seriousness in trying to address important issues seen by the Member responsible for moving this motion. The government is doing its very best to address those areas.

With these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I resume my seat. Thank you.

**Hon. SOGAVARE:** Mr. Speaker, I too want to add my voice on this motion moved by the colleague Leader of the Independent Group in Parliament. The motion is there before us requesting Parliament to give an affirmative vote on this motion to look at the areas outlined by the mover of the motion to us and made a statement to support the motion, upon which we are now debating it.

The government, of course, made a point by asking the Minister of Lands to stand up first and place the position of the government right from the beginning. And that is that the government is of the view that the motion is unnecessary. I think that is doing injustice to the motion right from the very beginning. We would have thought that the Minister responsible for the portfolio should really be listening to the debates firstly in relation to what Members of Parliament on both sides of the House are saying before a verdict is passed on any motion that is placed before Parliament, especially private member's motion.

In fact, a lot of thought is given to this motion in its preparation. The Leader has a genuine concern. It is a well researched motion and for it to be just brushed aside from the very beginning despite what other Ministers are saying, the person responsible for the portfolio basically said this motion is totally

unnecessary right from the very beginning. It does not say a lot about diplomacy in this House on how we put issues and maybe give it a fair go for all of us to scrutinize and discuss. I think in brushing aside this motion right from the beginning is like throwing away a baby with water when we do not really listen to the views that would be expressed by other colleague members of the House.

Sir, in saying that I think all who have spoken on this motion are all saying the right thing. I support this motion, but I would like to support it within a given context of how this country looks at the issue of land, and in particular land on Guadalcanal and Honiara.

I think the real issue here, Mr. Speaker, if we need to talk about the perking order to address the importance of the various elements of this motion, I see point 1(d) as the most important point that should be rated one in terms of perking order in order to address all the land issues in Honiara; on the issues causing conflict and disharmony in communities in Honiara and throughout the Guadalcanal province.

We just need to appreciate what has happened in this country in year 2000, leading to year 2000 from 1998 onwards. In fact, I have a whole file of it here about the developments of what has happened up to year 2000. I guess some of us who are in this House have lived through it and have seen how these things have developed up to what happened in 2000 to really appreciate what we are talking about now.

Sir, as I said everything we say in here is correct. If we go down and look at the sentiments that are said, that are written and I guess presented in conferences, presented during negotiations, some of the things we are saying here if put in the context of the way people respond to issue of land in Solomon Islands probably we need to retract some of the things we said. Statements like, it is the Commissioner of Lands that owns lands and others. Of course, he owns it by virtue by act of alienation; it is by act of alienation. If we really go down and see this, may be we need one time to sit down, lock the door up and seriously discuss the problems of this country.

The Commissioner of Lands only owns land by virtue of act of alienation. That is the very action that the people of Guadalcanal and the people of Solomon Islands, of the three land commissions that looks at land, probably the decolonization and the mines committee, just at the eve of independence came out very clear on this issue of land alienation. The Philip's Commission as well as the Allan's Commission are the two serious commissions that sat down and seriously looked at issues of land by the colonial government. Probably the Allan's Commission is closer to what we wanted to do today. He looks at trying to address the issues of land looking at it from the eyes of Solomon Islanders and our land tenure system, and that forms the foundation of the 1969 Lands Act that



we are now adopting. That is the work of the Islands Commission. But at the eve of independence, I think in 1974 or about that time, this decolonization committee was set up that looks at mine issues as well. And it came out very clear that there is no more alienation of land. Alienation in 1969 or something was saying that it should be returned to original landowners. That was clear in the report of that committee, a special select committee that was set up by the government at that time.

When we talk about the Commissioner of Lands owning lands, he only owns land by act of alienation and that is the very, very action that people of this country are disputing, and it causes leading to the problem that we faced in 2000.

Whilst everything we are saying, I fully agree with them, we need to understand it in the context in which we are seeing these issues, in the context of what is before us. There is no point going back to history, but when we discuss this land reform the government is going to bring in, maybe we will start to look at those points. But at the end of my presentation I will put before government what I feel we should really be addressing on this particular matter.

In the beginning of my statement, Mr. Speaker, I said I will support this motion within a given context. Sir, if you look at the way, and we should not forget very easily as leaders on what has happened in our country and how we agree; we consented to address the problems we are facing in the country.

The Townsville Peace Agreement, which the late Francis Saemala puts together in a booklet here that we have a copy of for our study, although a number of issues that are taken up in this TPA and of course the Commission of Inquiry on the Riot is very critical of some of its provision, it does not matter what we want to say about this agreement, all the issues that are raised here and are brushed aside by governments are continuing to be brought up by people. It is clear that its provisions are quite very important and people still have very strong feelings on them. Every time you hear them talking on the radio you will hear them talking about these issues. These are issues brought up in the TPA, brushed aside and shelved.

The fear here is that when you do that and tighten its lid and air is not coming out, it could explode one day in your face. The TPA is very clear on how we should deal with land issues. When the TPA was signed in Townsville by people who were involved in the tension in 2000, which brought this country to its knees, it crawled on its back and not on its stomach, just like a turtle that cannot walk. Statements the government has been saying as not necessary and unnecessary is not appropriate. Let me read to you, what they were saying, "The Solomon Islands undertakes to appoint a commission of inquiry under the Commission of Inquiry", and that will be one of my suggestions here that we really need to take that seriously, I think that is a real issue here, "after

consulting the Malaita Provincial Government and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government to inquire into acquisition of land on Guadalcanal by non Guadalcanal persons with the view to making findings and recommendation on the validity of land transactions prior to 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1998". It continues to go on "until the commission of inquiry submits its findings and recommendations, land previously acquired and occupied by non Guadalcanal person shall not be occupied, developed, sold or disposed of". It continues on to say, "The terms of reference will be formulated by the office of the Prime Minister" Point (d) is an important one and it says, "Without prejudice to the above, matters of land, occupation and title may come within the jurisdiction of the province or state in which the land is situated. Upon establishing jurisdiction over land by Guadalcanal provincial or state government, a fair and just process will be established to assess the legality of claims over land" and then it went on to say, "until this legislative power is approved by Parliament, a moratorium on all transactions concerning Guadalcanal land shall be in place to maintain peace". That is the premise on which we are dealing with these issues. And it stemmed from what will eventually go into the TPA. It stemmed from concerns raised by the people of Guadalcanal on the issue land. I have a whole file of it here because we are dealing with this right from the very beginning. A letter written to the government on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1999 was brought up. But it refers to several other submissions, in fact, it gives a history of how these things are happening beginning from 1978 outlining issues that we should really be concerned about, and one of them is land. I do not want to read what was said in the letter here, but I will go straight to the appendix which lists Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly demands by the bona fide and indigenous people of Guadalcanal.

Amongst these almost 13 primary demands and broken down into several others more, but particularly on land the people of Guadalcanal are saying this, "that the Lands and Titles Act be reviewed and amended to encompass our diverse norms, customs and cultural practices, example the land tenure systems of the various provinces. That is why I made some prelude remarks already on the way we are addressing land reform in this country. We should really be looking at codifying land tenure system of Solomon Islands based on this.

On point (b) our people from Guadalcanal are saying, "that the term indigenous be further defined so that citizens of other provinces would be restricted from owning land in perpetuating in another province". Of course, it leaves this open to fixed term titles. But it is talking about perpetual titles to land. They are also saying that they want lands that are perpetually held, their titles are perpetually held by the state to go back to them. That is why I made the comment right from the very beginning that the Commissioner of Lands that the Minister of Public Service referred to only owns land; in fact, he usurped that

right by act of alienation. And these are the lands; the Russell Islands Property Enterprises Limited or Lungga land, the Mamara Land, the Tasifarongo Land, the Mavo Land, the Ruaniua Land, the Lavuro Land, Brewers Solomon Associate Limited land at Metapona. They want these lands. People of Guadalcanal did not agree. Like I said, they did not question fixed term titles to land but it is the perpetual titles to those lands that they are concerned about as it really should be with them. That is what they are saying.

As alluded to by the Member for Central Guadalcanal who has spoken earlier on, they have also submitted a request for us to rent Honiara, that government pays rentals for the Honiara land, the TOL lands, including lands that are currently being squattered upon illegally. What I am saying here is that we are talking here but we need to talk within the context of these problems and how to address them. Actions you have mentioned like organizing TOLs are actions within a given context.

Still on land, Mr. Speaker, our people from Guadalcanal are saying, "That the national capital be relocated elsewhere on another province". Take Honiara away and it leads to the concerns raised by that Member for Central Guadalcanal who has spoken earlier on. Everything is here. I know that sometimes we only look at the face value of things. We just look at the demand to relocate the capital and we are shocked, our knees trembled against each other and we fainted. We really need to go behind the room at the back and find out the reasons as why they come up with demands like that. And we all appreciate that it is probably not possible to remove the capital somewhere. But it arose because of some serious discontentment by the people of Guadalcanal. They are not happy about certain things and so they are saying remove the capital. And I think it boils down to what the MP for Central Guadalcanal was saying that because every opportunity is here and that is why everyone is coming here to look for opportunities here.

Sir, that is why I said earlier on that when the Minister said this motion is unnecessary, that is quite a very irresponsible statement. This motion is really necessary for the government to seriously look at, because you are not addressing the issues that really need to be addressed. You are not taking into account the concerns that are still outstanding on these issues and you go ahead and work within the laws. But these demands are not really concerned about the laws that we have, they do not care about the laws that we have right now. That 1969 law was made by the colonial people to administer lands that were taken by the process of alienation. I think this motion is really necessary.

And of course, the other issues that the mover moved, which I totally agree that we need to address, and the most important one, I think, and not I think but I have justified that by outlining the outstanding issues that are still

there to be addressed that the motion is important for government to seriously take into account and not just to brush it aside. Because the Minister has spoken first and probably cannot withdraw his statement. But it now probably boils down to vote in here whether we are serious about the problems highlighted in here, and serious about addressing issues that will establish lasting peace in this country. Is development that is peace oriented, development that is conscious of establishing lasting peace, and not just development, it should not be that. We are just looking in a nutshell and brush aside issues that really matters to the subjects that we bring to this Parliament to be discussed.

I think what is really important here, and the government rightly said that it does address that, and I think the speed at which we address these things has become very important. The Commission of Inquiry on Land Dealings on Guadalcanal is in the process of being established as revealed to us by the Prime Minister, the commissioners' appointments are being finalized, and they will go ahead to look at the land issues on Guadalcanal.

That is important, Mr. Speaker, and the way Guadalcanal people put it here is that any dealings on land must stop until that commission completes its report and submits it. That is what they are saying. But we are not doing that, we go ahead and deal with the lands without re-looking at the thinking of the people of Guadalcanal. That is very important and so that commission of inquiry must be speeded. If you need to put more resources into it, go ahead with it so that it speeds up the work of the commission to quickly do its work so that one very important concern the people of Guadalcanal have on the issue of land can be addressed.

Another one, of course, is land reform. The government is saying that land reform is currently going on. Of course, we are going to wait for the land reform bill before we can seriously discuss our views on it. But whatever we do on land reform, as I said, needs to be within the context of what the people of Guadalcanal are concerned about. As I said the land reform our government has been trying to advance is conscious of the thinking of people of Guadalcanal. What really should be addressed is not land dispute but address the causes of land dispute. That is what you should be addressing in any comprehensive land reform. We will have the opportunity to discuss that when the bill comes before the House.

The other important issue, and we need to thank the people of Guadalcanal, is that although they raised the issue of removing the capital somewhere, that is said out of frustration because we are not addressing the issues they are concerned about. And anyone can say anything when he/she is frustrated. I want to join the Minister of Police who has said this right from the very beginning that I think we have not thanked the people of Guadalcanal

enough for hosting us, hosting the capital, hosting important developments that keep this country going. We have not been thanking them enough. All they are asking in one of their demands is that 'please recognize those of us who own land that we have given to the government. My understanding is that the land of Honiara was only bought for maybe about 4,000 pounds and a few axes. Do you want to see where the indigenous owners, custodians of Honiara are living? Go and see them at the back way in tin shed huts; that is where they are living. But these are owners of the land we are enjoying here, riding around in our fancy vehicles on the roads built here, live in fancy houses and enjoying life while people who are hosting us, who have given their land to host us are tucked away. That is not fair, that is injustice. And so all they are asking is for us to recognize them. That is what they are saying. And it is a fair, fair request. And as alluded to by the Member of Parliament for Central Honiara maybe that is the way to go. In fact, the strategy that the Member came up with is the strategy we have thought about to start to initiate and we were going to come up with a special levy legislation that will not only look at rent in Honiara but rent in other provincial headquarters where lands have been alienated for government use.

Those are the three areas that I think are now very, very important for us to address so that everything we are saying in here makes sense in the context of outstanding issues that are still there to be addressed pertaining to land and how Guadalcanal people are seeing that issue.

As a prominent leader and statesman of Guadalcanal said, "You cannot differentiate and you cannot isolate Honiara land from Guadalcanal. Honiara will always and always be part of Guadalcanal". As rightly pointed out by the Member for Central Guadalcanal there are people who own this land before it was alienated to the colonial governments.

Sir, I support these issues that are raised as a matter of concern by the Leader of the Independent group on this particular motion but as I have said within the context of what I have been saying that I feel that while we are addressing the issues raised by the Leader in his motion, we must not forget to consolidate the actions we are going to take, the administrative actions we are going to take on the land that we do not forget the fundamental issues that we need to address to ensure that everyone is happy when we address the issues that the Leader of the Independent has mentioned in his motion.

Sir, I do not want to speak too long on this motion, I think I have made my point and that is the only point I would like to raise here. I fully support this motion and I call on Ministers and Backbenchers that if you defeat this motion today you will be saying that you are concerned about the issues that people of Guadalcanal are concerned about on land issues on Guadalcanal, which are real

issues that should be addressed, and not the kind of issues you have been telling us, and that is if you really want to address land issues in Solomon Islands.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I support it and I call on all of you to support it too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Sitting suspended for lunch break*

*Parliament resumed at 1.50 pm*

**Mr. NUAIASI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to speak on this very important motion moved by the honorable Leader of the Independent and honorable MP for West Honiara. The motion as we all know is to do with land in Honiara to ensure it is used properly and shared equally amongst everyone in Honiara and dealt with according to laws and legislations that are in place.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know land is an important factor of creating production for economic opportunities. Today, as the population grows and land becomes scarce and land becomes scarce because of population growth therefore we started to squeeze inside a small piece of land. This is one factor that made us come across difficulties and problems we are trying to analyze and see in ensuring land is distributed or dealt with accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know the starting of the government in colonial times and even during independence and after independence a lot of legislations relating to land ownership, land acquisition and land distribution has been in place by successive governments. Sir, I will be very brief because this motion talks about land on Honiara. However, I think it should not only talk about land in Honiara but it should also talk about land in other provincial headquarters too because that is where administrative activities started in the colonial times. Today we are experiencing what we should say a growing population, which our land is incapable of accommodating. Hence a lot of pressures that are put forward to acquire land in Honiara became more evident, and everybody has experienced this.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of our young population or even the population of before is looking forward to acquiring and owning a piece of land in Honiara. This is because they know that by acquiring a piece of land in Honiara they would have something for their future hence would be earning something that would make them become financially independent. That is the mentality that is making people to come to Honiara in order to live in a luxury house, own a land and make use of it to ensure some business undertakings are also in operation.

Sir, what I want to say here is that instead of only looking at developing Honiara and ensure that land in Honiara is managed properly, we should look at the provinces too. Today as you know, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people travel to Honiara looking for job opportunities, but what about our provincial headquarters. We can see from experience or from our observations that a lot of provincial headquarters have not been developed or concentrated on and therefore the flow of the populace to the urban areas because people think they are going to be better off in their own living coming to town. That is the reason causing these things.

The mover of the motion has highlighted very important issues that we as a government should take note of. I must say here that land availability is not enough for us unless land is rehabilitated where we do what other countries are doing by taking grounds or land from big mountains and constructing reclaimed lands further. But again financially, we would not be able to do that at this point in time.

Allocation of land which we are seeing only certain individuals have big pieces of land is because of future plans that they have. However, this is now time for us to see that if anyone does not develop his/her land according to regulations or legislations that are in place, we should act accordingly.

There have been a lot of good measures taken by the Ministry in ensuring land distribution, land availability or land allocation is done according to legislations. However, because of the fact that land is scarce all allocation problems have eventuated because there is no land to allocate. In Honiara too there should be some sort of good planning. This time you could hardly notice the difference to an industrial area from a retailing area for shops. There is no market area for cash crops too, and you even cannot tell the difference to a residential area. Why, because the population is growing and a lot of legislations are not implemented. This is causing a lot of confusion within our township in Honiara. For example, we have a big market house but a lot of people are still selling goods besides their house. A lot of people are still enjoying selling things at the front of their houses. During colonial times or even after independence you hardly see such things happening. This should be looked into with the view of abolishing or reducing this type of arrangement so that we have enough land for certain things and we have enough land to build infrastructure like schools and so forth.

Sir, we can say that land is an asset that everyone is talking about not only here in Honiara but in our provinces too. A lot of people in the provinces and landowners are disputing themselves about land. Land scarcity is becoming eminent and we should be trying to ensure that we develop other areas so that

people do not only flow into Honiara but they go to the provinces to enjoy developments in those centers too.

With those few remarks, I take my seat.

**Mr. Speaker:** In our debate, I just want to remind Members not to make reference to MP's names as per Standing Order 32(5).

**Hon. GUKUNA:** Mr. Speaker, I would also like thank the mover of the motion, the honorable Leader of Independent for this very important motion. This is a motion that touches the heart of our people here in Honiara and I think it is very good of him to have thought of this by bringing this motion to this House.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is very specific. This motion is a very specific motion in that it talks about the management and administration of lands here in Honiara. Sir, to argue this motion and take our arguments outside Honiara is totally irrelevant to this motion. Mr. Speaker, land is a very sensitive issue, land is something that we have fought over, and so to argue this motion in the context of land outside Honiara is to take this motion out of hand. Whether this land in Honiara is a Guadalcanal land, whether it was taken at a certain price is another issue. It is an issue that is irrelevant to this motion because this motion is very specific, and let me just read it you again, Mr. Speaker. It says the government urgently acts to address the crises in the management and administration of land in Honiara, and Honiara is from Tandai to somewhere in Burns Creek. That is the land we are talking about. As I said let us not broaden this to issues that could get out our discussions.

As you know, this motion as far as I see it is asking for a system of management and administration here in Honiara so that the system is fair to Solomon Islanders in Honiara. That is basically what the motion is asking for. It is asking for a system that will ensure Solomon Islanders in Honiara have access to Honiara land. What this motion is assuming is that there is corruption in the Ministry of Lands, the administrators and managers of lands here in Honiara. If we think this system is corrupt then we cannot blame it because a lot of our people are frustrated, a lot of our people have tried their best for years and years and still the system that is now in place is still unable to give them land and to help our people.

The question here is how we can identify issues that have made the management and administration of land here in town not able to assist our people. The system that is in place now is so unfair to Solomon Islanders that when a Solomon Islander owns a prime piece of land everybody started to raise eyebrows. But when an outsider owns a piece of land a lot of us would accept it



as part of the system, and in fact that is the system. The system is so distorted that we look at Solomon Islanders owning land in Honiara as very suspicious.

One of the things that has distorted the management and administration of lands here in Honiara is the attitude of developers and investors. Some of them have been so absorbed in their plans and some of them have been so absorbed with the need to secure land that they do not care how they get the land. In fact, some of them pay some individuals to do the work of trying to look for a plan for themselves and because of their plans they sometimes deliberately ignore rules, procedures and laws being set down by this country to properly acquire land in Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, these people, the developers are also putting a lot of pressures on the distribution of lands here in Honiara. There are some lands in Honiara that a lot of us are raising eyebrows as to why certain people got them. Mr. Speaker, allow me to point out to you a piece of land, in my opinion, which should not have been given to anybody under any circumstance. That piece of land is the land used to be owned by the Guadalcanal Province. The allocation of that land is under a lot of suspicion. I do not have the evidence but just by looking at the demarcation of that particular site, I suspect there are lots of things that need to be sorted out in regards to that piece of land.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the G-Province has been expressing its interest in taking back that land. That land, as we all know, was given out by somebody during the ethnic tension. This kind of obvious circumstances in the allocation of lands happens should be considered and it is my opinion that that piece of land should be acquired compulsorily; it should be taken back immediately. That piece of land at the same time is very important for ports development. I understand that the Ports Authority is going ahead to build a wharf just outside that piece of land. Unfortunately, the Ports Authority is having a lot of difficulties getting access to that spaces needed for the development. At the same time underneath that piece of land is a pipeline that transports fuel supplies from tankers to authorities in this country, which are the two depots in Honiara. As a result of that land being given away and in addition to Ports Authority being unable to develop its plans on that land, the cost of fuel also increases because the new landowner in that piece of land is charging a substantial amount for that pipeline which has been there for years and years before that particular landowner came in. Mr. Speaker, I raise that in the interest of the public, in the interest of this country that that piece of land, whoever is responsible must be reposessed immediately.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is consistent, very consistent with a report we have been discussing earlier this week, and that is the Commission of Inquiry into the Honiara riots in 2006. One of the factors identified in that report has

something to do with the lack of development in our settlements here in Honiara. In fact, when issues of lack of developments in settlements were raised in the past, one of the excuses being conveniently brought up is that the lands were not properly demarcated and are under TOL. Mr. Speaker, if we are going to strengthen our management and administration of lands here in Honiara through this motion, I am sure it will lead to the immediate improvement of our settlements and that should give us all the excuses to make sure that proper sanitation, proper water supplies and electricity reach our settlements.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain individuals, business people here in Honiara who have taken out big lands and continue to build houses on them, expand their businesses and as noticed can very easily acquire land in town. Sir, we might say we are a bit jealous but the world is like that. But what is interesting is that while these people are holding out these lands and some of them get these lands but just leave them without developing them, they have been there for 15, 16, 17 years. While these people are holding lands for their future expansion, they are holding lands as investment, our people of this country are struggling and are looking in desperation for a piece of land just to put up a roof over their heads. While the wealthy people of this country are taking land for their future investments, Solomon Islanders are struggling to put a roof over their heads. Outsiders, and excuse me for saying this, must realize that we Solomon Islanders also want land. They must not be greedy; they must stop the greed that made them distort the management and distribution of land here in Honiara. They must also realize that land in Honiara and elsewhere in the world is one of the greatest potentials that create disharmony in our society.

Past governments recognize as well as this government recognizes the importance of distributing land properly, and that is why this motion is being supported by the government and that is why I assume a lot of my colleagues also support this motion as it deals to issues that can relate directly to the harmony of this country. We have tried our best in the past and there may have been some shortfalls on what we have done so far but this motion is calling again for our concerted efforts to work together giving it another try, this time with the specific aim of ensuring Solomon Islanders are treated properly in Honiara out of the system that is going to be fair for everybody.

As we speak, thousands of Solomon Islanders here in Honiara are building houses, building homes on pieces of lands that they are not even sure whether they are going to acquire it tomorrow or not. They continue to build houses on those lands. They continue to put up shelters, not knowing whether they will live in those houses tomorrow. Tonight, Mr. Speaker, tens and hundreds of Solomon Islanders are sleeping in their shelter, not sure whether they will sleep again in the same shelter tomorrow. That is the system we need

to address. That is the system this motion is calling us to put in order because these people are unsure of this uncertainties, and this could explode into a nasty situation.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments in support of this motion, this House will pass this motion; there is no question about that. We are not passing it in response to the call by the Leader of Opposition, but we are passing it because we think this motion is a good motion and we have no question about the intention of this motion.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I resume my seat and I fully support this motion. Thank you.

**Mr BOSETO:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity for me to share my very brief contribution to the debate of this very important motion.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I thank the mover, the honorable leader of the Independent for this very responsible and challenging motion. Mr. Speaker, the motion is an urgent call for nation building and our nation building's centre is here in Honiara, the seat of our national government of Solomon Islands, and therefore I thank the people of Guadalcanal Island for generously allowing this part of their island for our national capital, although the implication of their bona fide demands are still to be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is more than just a motion. It is a prophetic call to comply with the preamble of our national constitution which says, "we shall uphold the principles of equality, social justice, and the equitable distribution of incomes", and I add "our resources". It is a prophetic call to stop using false scales and weights of exploitation, exclusion, marginalization, favoritism, nepotism as Prophet Micah expresses in Chapter 6:

Mr. Speaker, this motion is not only a call in doing justice in Honiara, but also a call to distribute more lands to our environmental and sustainable development in all our nine provinces. Mr. Speaker, the good news of justice and equal distribution of human, financial and material resources must be seen as a divine base and a new human root of the kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy which the Holy Spirit alone gives.

Mr. Speaker, in order to take more action than just mere words, let me share the following cause of action to do some survey, our national government through the Ministry of Lands, the Honiara City Authority, with the support of all our nine provinces to check:

- (1) Who are the landless in their provinces, from which they come here in Honiara?

- (2) Who are the permanent residents in Honiara from outside of Guadalcanal?
- (3) Who are the lius doing nothing in Honiara?
- (4) Who are the genuine and potential investors, both from within and outside of Solomon Islands here in Honiara?
- (5) Who are permanent settlers in Honiara?

To me it is very important to accommodate those from the atolls because the high watermark is growing because of climate change and there is no other place for them to live and so our nation Solomon Islands, all the islands must consider this because if we want to build our nation, we must emphasize unity and I am for unity in diversity or in diversity.

Second, with the long term action plan of the nine provinces or state government which we will shortly receive, I think, the national government must urgently move relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Lands, National Planning, Infrastructure, Ministry of Finance and others to take action or implement the provincial development plan without delay. For example, I am still the president of the Luru Land conference, I wrote a circular to all the conveners of the 12 area committees around Choiseul. I want to read this so that you know that we too through the Luru Land Conference want to work with the government, start with the province. This is what I wrote: "I am expecting all our national and provincial members to attend our next annual Luru Land Conference General Meeting in Katazi area. Remember our main agenda for this year's general meeting is Popoloto. Popoloto means to report on what you have been doing. I am not expecting mere talking but what you have been doing must be reported in the following areas: (1) amicably resolve tribal land boundaries with the act of reconciliation and celebration, (2) identify tribal heads or clans elder or custodians of land and the people, (3) propose plans for mini economic centers or resource centers or government administration or substations etc, (4) land for social and agricultural or technical projects of programs

- (2) Sustainable management and harvesting of our natural resources and caring for our river sources work in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, WWF, the Choiseul Province and other non-governmental organizations
- (3) Financial ownership of the administration and programs of the Luru Land Conference of Tribal Community. I enclose here copies of the previous year's budget
- (4) Other important and urgent issues to revisit and address. Let us have faith that moves forward with action.

Lastly, I thank the mover of the motion. While the motion addresses the situation in Honiara, we must open up other places in our provinces and constituencies for our national policy of decentralization and indigenization of democracy based on the ideology of people centered.

Mr. Speaker, since we are citizens of both heaven and earth, let us trust the owners of our lands, our God the Creator to resource us with His wisdom and Heavenly riches so that we respect his image in each of us to love him more so that we love more our neighbors as we love ourselves. With those few remarks, I totally support the motion. Thank you.

**Hon. LILO:** Mr. Speaker, I also would like to join others to contribute to the debate of this motion. In recognizing the importance of the motion moved by the honorable Leader of the Independent that government should act urgently to address the crisis on management and administration of land in Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very sensitive issue that we will need to talk openly and honestly about on how we will find ways to deal with the issue of land in Honiara, and not only the urban township in Honiara but also the other urban centers in the country too. While this motion is seeking us to look into the land issue here in Honiara, it touches on other issues that have also affected us in the past, which contributed to the tension we have experienced in the past. It also affected the way we have been seen as a collapsed society in 2006 that has led to the April riot in 2006, and most importantly the pressing need for land that we will continue to face here in Honiara moving forward. And so it is an issue that we will continue to dialogue and talk honestly about.

Mr. Speaker, the way this land we are talking about was acquired, we will never probably go through any system like that again, not only here in Honiara but other parts in the country that have gone through the same process of acquisition that Honiara has gone through. In that context, there are people who felt that their generation then and their generation even today and into the future will continue to feel that there are injustices and unfairness inflicted on them in the past, leading to the way that this land has been acquired that we must talk openly about it too. Therefore, I believe the process in which Honiara was acquired will never be gone through again, and we will still continue to find difficulty in acquiring more land in Honiara too if we do not address the situation in Honiara today, especially in relation to the injustices that a lot of indigenous people of Solomon Islands or Guadalcanal have felt they have not been properly treated in the way the government acquired this land in the past. We need to come with some good and creative ways as to how we are going to deal with this issue.

If we enter into development in other lands that we have interest in to undertake major developments and then say we should give ownership, some form of ownership to the people or some interest of shareholding to the people owning these lands, then we need to think some ways like that too here in Honiara. Because that is an issue that is still alive to the people here on Guadalcanal, and I want to leave this issue in that way.

But in relation to the management and administration of the lands in Honiara, Mr. Speaker, our law is there on how to deal with divisions, subdivisions and allocations of lands in Honiara. If we feel that law does not work, then let us look into doing some reforms to that law too. In that respect, I welcome the initiative taken by the Ministry of Lands in looking into reforming or to reviewing the Lands and Titles Act so that we improve the way that particular Act is being used in administering lands here in Honiara. If we have not done anything at all then we should blame ourselves because for the past 30 years this is one piece of legislation that has never been reviewed. There has never been any review done on the Lands and Titles Act. It remains as it is since we gain independence until today and so we have to do something about it. The Minister of Lands has mentioned today that there is a major review going on in the Ministry of Lands, including the legislation. The administration is also looking into the technical capacity of the Ministry in the administration of that Ministry, and which we need to fully support. In that context, I do not see why we should not support this motion since it is a very good motion. It is a motion that in a way is consistent with the work the Ministry of Lands is doing right now in going about with the reform and review of the administration and the various legislations they have in administering lands here in Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, one issue we are facing right now is the land occupied by our settlers, the TOLs. I think what we need to do is to encourage the Ministry of Lands to proceed with the project that past governments have put together and which is currently being implemented, I think, and that is to quickly regularize all TOLs in Honiara to quickly put in some form of titles that can be recognized by our institutions in the country to enable these people use that as security or collaterals to access resources to build better homes. That is what we should be doing. These people have been living on these lands and they seem to be doing as much effort as they can to build good homes and to be part of this modern life here in Honiara. However, the only thing that continues to hinder them to go further is the fact that they do not acquire titles to those lands, and so we must regularize those lands. We have to move quickly to ensure all TOLs that have been issued and are now more than what is supposed to be temporary occupation licenses are regularized. I say this because it is already illegal for TOL to be that long. They cannot continue to be TOLs for more than 10 to 15

years. That is wrong. And so we have to quickly move towards regularizing the TOLs so that people are seen to have strong interest in owning properties and developing better homes here in Honiara can do so with better arrangements for them to access resources that can lead to them building better homes and assets for them and their families too. That is what we should be doing, and it does not apply to only one part of Honiara but it should apply to all other parts in Honiara where there are settlements that continue to occupy the TOLs.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we should also urge our people too to respect our laws. Part of the reasons why the Ministry of Lands is run down is simply because of ourselves, it us and our people. The MP for Rendova /Tetepare must listen to this because it is exactly that some of you have been doing too, and this is causing officials to do something that is contrary to law.

Sir, in moving forward with this kind of motion trying to do something good, at the same time we should also encourage our people to respect the laws. Our laws are there and if we choose not to respect our laws then we are surely going down this way; this is the path we will go down. If we urge our people to respect the law and follow the law, we will go the right path. Recognizing the reality we are now facing at this time, let us do something to fix it and at the same time we need to encourage our people and all of us too, including public officials to respect the law so that we do not face the same problem even if we fix the problem that we have right now and not repeat the same problem into the future.

Sir, this is a very good motion that all of us must support. I am really encouraged by the contribution made by the Minister of Lands this morning that the Ministry of Lands has good plans and it has taken the initiative to address land administration in Solomon Islands, including Honiara as priority. With those remarks, I support this motion. Thank you.

**Mr. ZAMA:** Mr. Speaker, I would be very brief in my contribution. First, I would like to thank the honorable Member for West Honiara and Leader of the Independent group for moving this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is overdue in my humble view as it has been lying in the Department's shelves for the last 30 years. Unfortunately, it has now resurfaced. However, before I get on with my brief contribution I just want to register my disappointment here. Firstly, the Prime Minister should have been sitting here and be part of this debate being someone from Guadalcanal, especially when we are talking about land in Honiara and Guadalcanal. Likewise the Deputy Prime Minister who is from Malaita and is now sitting in for the Prime Minister should also be listening attentively.

**Hon Fono:** Point of order, Mr Speaker. Human as we are the Prime Minister is not feeling well and so he has asked me to sit in his place. This is just in response to the comment by the MP for Rendova/Tetepare. Thank you.

**Mr. Zama:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the Deputy Prime Minister's clarification for the absence of the Prime Minister. What I am raising here is that this is a prime and opportune time for the CNURA Government to look at this issue.

The other disappointment I would want to raise at the outset is how the government rallied itself. Since the opening of the debate this morning we saw a distorted and a government in disarray, especially in the way it approached this motion, it is very clear. It shows a government running out of direction in the way it is addressing this very important and long and overdue issue. I am raising this because the Minister unfortunately did not quite understand parliamentary procedures. When the motion was introduced this morning by the honorable mover, the Prime Minister signaled to the Minister urging him to speak first and so the Minister spoke and openly declared in Parliament that this motion is inappropriate and does not support it. It was only when the Leader of Opposition raised made the call that this is an important motion that Ministers after the adjournment this morning started rallying their support for the motion. Mr. Speaker, that to me is a very clear indication of a government running out of direction and running in disarray.

Mr Speaker, let me now get on to the debate. Whether this land is in Honiara or Guadalcanal or anywhere else, we are now seeing a direct result of the unity of Solomon Islands. The issue of land is not unique to Honiara and Guadalcanal for that matter. Squatters are everywhere and illegal settlements are everywhere. Where there is development whether it is in Honiara, Lata, Noro, Gizo Buala, Auki, there will always be illegal settlers or squatters for that matter. But what else can we say? For us to be figure pointing these people would be very irresponsible of ourselves. I think we should be now seriously thinking outside of the box instead of being very narrow minded in our approach and our thinking.

These people have squattered on this land not by choice but by design because of a centralized system. Because everything is in Honiara, everything is on Guadalcanal and that is why people are flocking into Honiara because of a better life or an easy life. The people who are settling outside of Honiara are not from Egypt, they are not from Arab or the United States. Some of these people are from Rendova, some of them are from Choiseul, some of them are from Temotu, and some of them are even from Guadalcanal, some of them from Rennell and Bellona in West Honiara, they are all over. Unfortunately one particular group have been labeled as squatters or illegal settlers but everyone



are illegal settlers outside and so we cannot just pinpoint one particular ethnic group as illegal settlers but everyone. We cannot blame those people but blame the system and the government structure on how it is designed that made people coming to Honiara. If we put Honiara in Auki for that matter or maybe Tulagi there will be illegal settlers there too. Right now in Noro, there are illegal settlers, whether I call them illegal settlers or people finding easy life or making life easy. On the paper they are already a lot of unemployed people looking for a better life settling in Noro. What else can we say? The same thing that is happening here in Honiara or on Guadalcanal is going to crop up everywhere.

I am seriously calling on all Members of Parliament to try and start talking to these people if that is what we need to do in order to get things straightforward. When I wanted to raise this issue, some MPs were saying it is a sensitive issue and so I should not talk about it because people will be angry with me. But this is the place, on the floor of Parliament that we need to talk about sensitive issues, and not in the coffee room, not on the streets, not in the offices, but Parliament is the appropriate place, it is the right venue to raise sensitive issues so that everybody, all over Solomon Islands hear and know them and let us talk about them. If land is a sensitive issue bring it on the floor of Parliament for us to talk about, and not outside. Not everybody else should be talking about it. Kolombangara is filled with illegal settlers too. Gizo is filled with illegal settlers. Rendova is filled of illegal settlers too, squatters, and these are national issues that Parliament alone must resolve. So let us talk about regardless of how sensitive they might be, how throat cutting they would be, bring them in and let us discuss it. That is the issue.

This issue is one of the downsides of the “united we stand divided we fall” thinking or theory. Solomon Islands was never meant to be one country from the beginning. Solomon Islands was never meant to be one country because if Guadalcanal is on its own independent nation or state then there is not going to be squatters here. If Honiara is in Auki the same thing would happen too. Therefore, in talking about this motion the issue of land is not a stand alone issue. We need to look a little bit broader on other related issues on why land has become an issue in Honiara and Solomon Islands. In talking about land issues let us go beyond and broader to look at other interrelated issues that bring about this issue.

This is a wake up call to the CNURA Government because maybe other past administrations have not seriously taken this issue on board. I am seriously calling on the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Lands who has been very narrow minded in his debate this morning by saying this motion is inappropriate, to pull up his socks and start to seriously look at this motion and then get the appropriate people to address it.

In talking about a land reform commission, Mr. Speaker, there are local Solomon Islanders who are very capable and qualified to be in this Commission. It is going to be a sad day if you get people from outside to be in this Commission who have no knowledge of land issues in Solomon Islands, have no knowledge of our cultures, and have no knowledge of our society. In talking about land I am always reminded by what the late Member for Aoke/Langa Langa on land on the use of words like “people, land, alienation, divide and rule” all these issues. The system of government we have adopted today is the right structure of government. That is why when the government is looking seriously at what kind of structure we need to consider, I think there is a better way of dealing with these issues.

TOL is a sensitive issue and if you try to move someone else’s boundary you have to be very careful, especially when these people have been sitting on this land for the last 30 years or some maybe more than that. For us as a government and Parliament to continue discussing it without the Ministry of Lands not doing anything about it is a very irresponsible attitude. Regardless of how sensitive it is, the Ministry of Lands must deal with it. The project which has been initiated some two to three years ago must continue. Look at the issue of squatters in West Honiara, Central Honiara and East Honiara, and also now beyond the borders of Honiara town like the Lungga and Henderson areas where there are now growing squatter settlements there. What else can we say because this is where development is. If we want Solomon Islands to continue to be a united Solomon Islands, then let us live with these problems. We must live with these problems. If that is what we leaders think that Solomon Islands must continue to be one country then accept these problems. It is simple as that. You just cannot brush them aside and look for a better way to address them.

That is why some of us have been calling for developments to be pushed down to provinces and to constituencies. If we have the Bina Harbor development coming up or the Auluta Basin Oil Palm Basin, people will surely go back to Malaita and work there. People are only here in Honiara because for want of a better life. If more money is poured into Malaita, more money poured into Isabel, more money poured into big projects in Choiseul, Western, the people of these provinces will go back because that is where better life is. Or may be promote Lake Tenggano so that those people settling on West Honiara can go back and settle there. I am seriously calling on the MP for Rennell/Bellona and the mover of this motion after talking together to settle some of the issues that have been raised in this motion. We as leaders must take the responsibility and approach our people because they are our people and as leaders I am pretty sure they will listen to us.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again thank all of you who have spoken for and who have a little misconstrued your thinking about this debate. I also thank the mover for moving this motion and I support this motion. Thank you.

**Mr. HUNIEHU:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to join my other colleagues who have contributed to this very important motion. All of us have agreed that land is important for the development of Honiara and Solomon Islands and therefore whatever we do the administration of land must reflect that very fact.

In looking at this motion I wholeheartedly believe the way it is worded will produce nothing for this country. I am suggesting that we look at another way of putting the motion so that some actions can be immediately done. I say this because I have moved so many motions of this nature in this Parliament and up until now nothing has happened to those motions, and this Parliament has been a house of motions.

Since independence many Members of Parliament have moved many good and important motions, but the ministries concerned failed to listen to the voice of Parliament. Therefore, I believe this motion if it is passed today will end up in the same road, and I do not think that is what Parliament is for. Parliament is to act, and the government is to act on motions passed by Parliament. If the mover of the motion wants some action immediately after this motion is passed, then I must suggest that the government appoints a select committee within the provisions of the Standing Order to look at the specific issues mentioned in this motion for further action. I think many motions that have asked government to establish select committees have provided important reports to Parliament and this is where the Ministry concerned can act upon them. But as I have said today, if this motion is passed today, the Ministry of Lands will do nothing about this important motion. Why do we call it an important issue Mr. Speaker? It is for somebody to start producing some actions on this motion.

Thank you very much Leader of Independent for moving this motion. I humbly ask that you reword your motion and ask Parliament to appoint a select committee to report on the details specified in this motion and include some more. It is not land in Honiara alone. We should also look at what other countries are doing in indigenizing land where local landowners own the land and register them and the government and the private sector starts renting that land from them. But here in Solomon Islands it is the government owning the land and renting out to the private sector and individuals and the indigenous landowners left out with nothing, and that is why we have too many land speculators in this country. It is time that we deregulate or re-regulate our land

policies to suit the requirements of the day, the requirements of the hour, requirements of the month and the requirements of the year.

Sir, the criteria of land ownership must also be specific. But sometimes the criteria are specific but the application of those criteria go haywire because of the politics of manipulation. This has got to stop at some points.

Many Solomon Islanders have none and some Solomon Islanders have so many that land is not equitably distributed. I wish to say here once again that we may criticize our foreign investors but it is not the foreign investors. Most of the time it is Solomon Islanders who corrupted those foreign investors. We use the system, we manipulate the system, we buy the piece of land from the government and we sell the lands at exorbitant high prices. That is why the price of land keeps on going up all the time.

I can say this because I have no vested interest in land in Honiara. I have no inch of land here. I have been living here for 40 years and I have been trying for 40 years without success. I am very sorry and sad but that is the case. Some of us have to be unprivileged like some of you, and yet you still complain. There is a saying that goes like this, 'I complain I have no shoes until I found someone without a toe'. It is time to critically look at these issues. I do not want to delegate this responsibility to the Ministry of Lands. I want the report to come back to Parliament for Parliament to debate and pass and then it will be Parliament to give instructions to the relevant ministries to implement it. I think we can produce some actions in that sense.

Like I said I do not need to keep repeating what others have said. We all have said many beautiful things about land issues. All the things we have been saying are true, and so if I may conclude by saying that please, my good mover of the motion, adjust the motion so that a select committee is tasked to look at these important issues, draw up its terms of reference so that a proper report is tabled in Parliament for those of us who are coming back next year. Thank you.

**Hon. HAOMAE:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief in contributing to this motion. At the outset, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of the Independent group and Member for West Honiara for bringing this important motion.

I think the Member for Rendova was quite unfair on the Minister for Lands for twisting what the Minister said when he said that the motion is inappropriate. I was here when the Minister said that because the Ministry is now handling all the issues contained in the motion, the motion is quite unnecessary. I think that is what the Minister was saying because the Ministry is very active under a very active minister and it is already dealing with all the issues embraced within the motion. I think that is the word the Minister used. I think the MP for Rendova has somewhat twisted what the Minister has said.

And I quite agree with the Minister making his reply first so that after he replied it means there is no need for us to contribute. That is the position of the government. But since the others have contributed, it has reached a stage that I also would like to contribute too. But the issue should have rested when the Minister presented the government's position on this important motion. But people have MPs have contributed including the Member for Rendova/Tetepare, and South New Georgia that prompted some of us to stand up and make talk.

Mr. Speaker, the motion reflects a deeper trend, the concerns within the motion on the migration from rural areas to urban areas. At one stage it was more or less cyclical. Our people in the rural areas come and then they go back. They came to work whether in private company or holding government positions and when they finish or retire they go back to where they belong to in the rural areas on their own land. Every indigenous Solomon Islanders have land. But the trend seems to be changing from cyclical to chronological hence they come and stay permanently and the population starts to increase and some of them keep on coming, maybe because of the reasons the Member for Rendova has rightly pointed out. But the land in Honiara remains the same. The land that is being dealt with by the motion remains the same unless we reclaim more lands into the sea to expand the land. But the Guadalcanal Province is very definite about the fact that Honiara cannot expand further beyond the boundaries it has at this time.

The present government is addressing these issues through the philosophy of rural advancement, and so it will take some time. It takes some years but if the next government continues with the policy it will address all these issues so that what the Member for Rendova mentioned on the expansion of urban centers in the provinces and open up development in the provinces will be addressed, and maybe not fully addressed it but it will ensure that the development of the country in a unified nation will happen in such a way that our people will find livelihoods and things like that, not only on their land as self employees for themselves but also other developments that will be going ahead. I think that issue is being addressed this time, and it will take some time. Rome is not built in one day, and so it will take some time, but if it is consistently addressed it will address the situation that Member for Rendova/Tetepare wanted.

Sir, we must show respect and respect the law that governs land, as mentioned by the Minister for Environment. It must be every one with no exception. Respect is a very important virtue. The public must respect the law and respect the officers who work in the Lands Department by not going there and say this is yours, under the table and you give me this land. We must respect and abide by the law.

The officers in the department must also respect the law and their work so that they can enforce the law. Like point 3(a) of the motion deals with a situation where land was allocated to a certain developer to build a housing estate but the developer whom the land was offered to were given 18 months as required by the law to develop the land but the lands were still not developed for about 10 years or even 20 years now.

The Ministry has advised, as the Minister has said, this time that we must respect the law in order to enforce that particular law. The public must ensure to respect that law too. When government offers you land to build your house, because I support the policy of home ownership, but when the government gives you land for you to build your house or whatever, you must respect that transaction in law by not reselling that land to other people whether they be Solomon Islanders or a foreign investor or whoever. You must respect the fact that the government gave you the land because you want it and so you applied through the normal channels and the government offered you the land and so you must build what you wanted on that land and do not resell it. If you sell the land then you are not respecting what the government has given you.

Also, Mr. Speaker, for purposes of respect when you are still to be given the land do not go and settle on it. Do not have the attitude of settling on it first and sort it out later. That is not respecting our law. We must go through the whole process. I have been working 30 years for the government and I applied but not even one land was given to me. But because I respect the process, so be it. If we respect the law, if we respect the ministries and those working in the Lands Department respect their work, I think things will be alright. But if we work outside of the principle of respect then we have these problems coming in. There was a model before where every company that is set up, the government allocated residential areas for them to build houses for their laborers. The government established the housing authority so that it builds houses for government workers. Then it came to the stage where the model is a bit blurred because direct allocations started to come in and some estates as mentioned in 3(a) were given and were never developed within the 18 months. Therefore, the people who were given land but have not developed them are also breaking the law, they did not respect that particular law. The issue I want to stress is the issue of respect. We have to respect our laws and the people who are given the responsibility to enforce the law must enforce it as a matter of respect to that particular law. I think if we had moved in that particular direction, we are going to be alright. The Act has never been reviewed and I thought it is a good Act and that is why it was not reviewed but it has reached a stage as mentioned by the Minister of Lands that they are dealing with these situations, and so it is now right.

The Member for Rendova is going out because I tried to correct him on some of things he has said the government has lost its direction on. No, Mr. Speaker, everything is in order. We were under the impression that the Minister of Lands has made his reply and so no one should contribute further. But since other matters have been raised we have the responsibility as the government to explain and clear those issues and that is why I stood up, Mr. Speaker, and so now I will sit down. Thank you

**Mr Tosika:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving this opportunity to wind up the debate on this motion I moved in Parliament. As everyone who has contributed said land is a resource we have that forms the basis of our living and which we also cherish in our life as it improves our life and livelihood.

As it is, as I mentioned in moving the motion, land in Honiara belongs to everyone in Solomon Islands, not forgetting those people who have the land rights in the early days when the colonial people took it over from them. In that I respect their views and aspirations. I think the need now is if a motion can be moved to specifically address the issues on Guadalcanal so that we can sort it out once and for all.

As the motion entails, it concerns people living in Honiara and using the land in Honiara for their livelihood. We know that a lot of us live here as well as our children and grandchildren were born here and live here and their local village has become a secondary place to them. A lot of them make their living here and get used to the lifestyle here and therefore cannot go back to their villages because the lifestyle here is different from where they come from.

I appreciate and have a thankful heart for everyone who contributed to this motion and even the government for supporting this motion. In fact this motion emanated from your policy statement which all of us embrace as it touches the lives of our people. It is our people who put us in power and therefore any policy that we make must be made to improve people's livelihood, and people is the center, and that is why I praise the government's purpose, aims and objectives. But when are we going to fulfill our policy aspirations? When are we going to really go down and say yes, this is our policy we will carry it out now and we want to lift you up and give assurance that you are citizens of Solomon Islands?

A Member suggested today that he wanted the motion to be amended to include establishing of a select committee to look into this concern. In my view, that is quite irrelevant, because it is based on honesty and sincerity when moving this motion. If the government sees the need now to pass the motion, then it means the onus is on the government to do something urgent to address the issue. It is not something that we will only talk about in here. There is no point

in establishing a select committee, which will only delay it. It is on us leaders that if we are honest and sincere, and then let us do it for our people. That is the essence of this motion. It is for us to give that opportunity to our people so that we do not leave them in darkness or we do not leave them unsecured.

I understand that in many lands in Honiara some people are still living on that TOL land but others have given fixed term estate to those lands and then they go and told the people living on those lands that this is an eviction order because you are only living on a TOL but I have the title to that land. That has just happened up here, so when are we going to look after the future of our people?

With these I thank everyone who contributes towards this motion and I thank their support. With that I beg to move Mr. Speaker.

*The motion agreed to*

**Hon Fono:** I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

*The House adjourned at 3.12 pm*