



**2025/26 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

17 JULY 2026

*(Sitting number 40 of the 2025/2026 Session)
(pages 3221-3396)*

**Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., JP, MP
Speaker**

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**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
17 July 2026
10:03 AM**

Sitting Number 40 of the 2025/2026 Session

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Somner, Clerk]

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. The House is now in session.

[Pause]

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 10 July 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from 10 July [2026] have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 10 July 2026 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: The following Members have indicated their absence today. Government Whip, MP [Neville] Tyrrell; MP Michael Fahy; MP Jamahl Simmons; and MP Wayne Furbert have all indicated their absence today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There is one this morning in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs *[sic]*.
Minister.
Thank you.

**ELECTRICITY (INTEGRATED RESOURCE
PLANNING PROCESS SUSPENSION AND
RECONSTITUTION) ORDER 2026**

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker. I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Electricity \(Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution\) Order 2026](#), proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Energy in exercise of power conferred by section 13A and 45B of the Electricity Act 2016.

The Speaker: Thank you. No more Papers.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: This morning, Members, we have quite a few. There are 11 Statements this morning, and the first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement this morning?

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning. Yes, Mr. Speaker, good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.

OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware of my recent [official visit to the Autonomous Region of the Azores](#), undertaken from the 12th to the 14th of July at the invitation of His Excellency José Manuel Bolieiro, President of the Regional Government of the Azores. This visit returned the courtesy of President Bolieiro's visit to Bermuda in October 2024, and that of his predecessor, President Vasco Cordeiro, in 2019; occasions on which successive Presidents extended their invitation for such a visit.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be accompanied by the Honourable Member the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, whose portfolio speaks directly to the themes of this visit.

Mr. Speaker, the ties between Bermuda and the Azores are ties of family. Since the first Portuguese immigrants arrived aboard the *Golden Rule* in 1849, generations of Azoreans have crossed the Atlantic to build lives in Bermuda, and today roughly 20 per cent of Bermudians carry that heritage, the highest proportion of Azorean descendants of any community in the worldwide Azorean diaspora. Their contribution runs through every field of Bermudian life, our agriculture, our construction, our businesses, our churches, and our sport and our culture.

Mr. Speaker, the programme opened with an official audience with President Bolieiro at Sant'Ana Palace in Ponta Delgada, where I signed the Book of Honour on behalf of the people of Bermuda. The President's warmth, and the generosity of the welcome extended throughout the visit, reflected the genuine affection in which Bermuda is held in the Azores. Our discussions with the President ranged across the breadth of the relationship and confirmed a shared determination on both sides to convert nearly 180 years of shared history into practical cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, a centrepiece of the visit was the Regional Government's presentation of the Blue Azores Programme. In October 2024, the Azores legislated the largest network of marine protected areas in the North Atlantic, protecting 30 per cent of the Azorean Sea across some 287,000 square kilometres, a world-leading achievement, delivered through a science-based process built on consensus.

Honourable Members will recognise in that description the very approach this Government has taken through the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme. Indeed, the two programmes share a founding partner in the Waitt Institute, and our two archipelagos share the waters of the Sargasso Sea. I therefore proposed, and the Regional Government welcomed, a structured technical exchange between our jurisdictions covering marine protected area implementation, enforcement and monitoring, the sustainable fisheries transition, and long-term conservation financing, so that as two mid-Atlantic [island] neighbours, we can continue to lead together in ocean governance.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend a working session on the Azorean community in Bermuda, convened by the Regional Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs and Communities, Dr. Paulo Estêvão and wish to place on record the Government's kind acknowledgement of the tireless advocacy of the Honorary Consul and of Bermuda's Portuguese community associations, whose work sustains this relationship day by day.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Honourable House of several matters arising from that session.

- i. The year 2027 will mark 600 years since the discovery of the Azores. The Regional

Government has made clear that Bermuda, home to the largest Azorean-descended community, per capita, anywhere in the world, will be kept a part of these historic observances.

- ii. On the recognition of Bermuda driving licences, I expressed this Government's undertaking in the 2024 Speech from the Throne to pursue structured reciprocity under the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic, and I re-affirmed that Bermuda is progressing that framework with the United Kingdom so that Bermudian visitors to the Azores, and indeed internationally, may drive with confidence.
- iii. On air connectivity, both sides affirmed the value of the direct link between Bermuda and the Azores. I paid tribute to the community-brokered charter programme which has preserved that vital artery, and this Government will remain engaged with all partners as commercial arrangements for the route continue to develop.
- iv. On language and culture, I was pleased to note the work of the Portuguese Cultural Association towards the development of a GCSE in Portuguese available to Bermuda's students. The teaching of Portuguese to a new generation of Bermudians is among the most meaningful legacies this relationship can leave. My Government applauds this initiative and stands ready to lend its encouragement as this work progresses.

Mr. Speaker, I also met with Professor Susana Mira Leal, Rector of the University of the Azores, whom I congratulated on her commencing a second term and on the University's fiftieth anniversary this year.

This meeting produced concrete outcomes. First, we agreed to initiate a workstream connecting the University's oceanographic research institute in the Azores with Bermuda's own experts, given the world-leading marine programmes of our two jurisdictions. Secondly, we agreed to explore synergies between the Bermuda College and the University of the Azores, discovering pathways for Bermudian students building on the College's established model of transfer agreements with overseas institutions. Thirdly, the Rector and I proposed a practical mechanism for the transfer of agricultural expertise to Bermuda, through the University's highly respected School of Environmental and Agrarian Sciences.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to note that at this very moment, two young Bermudians of Azorean descent, Ms. Sydney Rego and Ms. Catrina Furtado, are studying in the Azores as the first-ever Bermudian participants in the FLAD Summer Programme, an academic and cultural programme of the Luso-American Development Foundation in partnership with the University of the Azores and the Regional Government. Their participation, sponsored by the Portuguese Cultural Association working with the Azorean Diaspora

Council, is living proof of what these educational links can deliver, and I extend to both young women the congratulations of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, the wider programme highlighted Azorean life and innovation. We visited the Azores Autonomy Museum Centre at the Conceição Palace and the Azorean Emigration Museum in Ribeira Grande, which tells the story of the departures that helped shape communities like ours. We toured the Ribeira Grand geothermal power station, where the Azores generate a substantial share of their electricity from the earth itself, and the NONAGON Science and Technology Park in Lagoa, a hub for technology companies and innovation—and also, Mr. Speaker, where their Google landing site will be for their Nuvem cable.

Mr. Speaker, at the Azores Centre for Manufacturing, I met with Mr. Luís Estrela, Regional Director for Agriculture, Veterinary and Food, and received a presentation on the remarkable capability of Azorean manufacturers in the production of domestic food products, from dairy to preserved goods. Our discussions focused on how Bermuda may benefit from the Azores' expertise in this field, especially in dairy production.

Mr. Speaker, the measure of any such visit lies in what follows. I have asked technical officers from the Government of Bermuda to pursue follow-up discussions with their Azorean counterparts in the areas with clear potential for cooperation including; agriculture and food security, energy, cultural and digital connectivity, and academic and technical collaboration with the University of the Azores.

Mr. Speaker, for 177 years the story of Bermuda and the Azores has been written by families, by those who left, those who arrived, and those who kept faith on both shores. This visit honoured that story and set a course for its next chapter, one in which two mid-Atlantic archipelagos work together on the challenges and opportunities we share—from the health of our oceans to the education of our young people, from food security to the energy transition. This visit is evidence that the Bermuda-Azores relationship now reaches beyond our historic ties towards a shared future.

Mr. Speaker, I extend the sincere thanks of the Government and people of Bermuda to His Excellency President Bolieiro, to the Regional Government of the Azores, and to the people of the Azores for a welcome worthy of the deep and enduring friendship between our islands

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Premier.
The second Statement—

[Microphone not on]

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, 18 July, will be nine years since this Progressive Labour Party Government was returned to office.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: We were returned as Government with a clear mandate: To [build a fairer and better Bermuda](#). For many Bermudians, this meant a government that would work for fairer taxes, dignity and protection for workers, support for our seniors, and more affordable homes. Today I rise to give this Honourable House, and the people we serve, an account of that promise, and the progress that has been made.

Mr. Speaker, to understand how far we have come, we must first look back at where we started. In 2017, this Government inherited a country worn down by years of austerity. We inherited the highest debt in Bermuda's history, a failed development at Morgan's Point that costs taxpayers more than \$200 million—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And counting!

Hon. E. David Burt: —and a bad airport deal. Public officers had been asked to make significant sacrifices—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: Ah, ah—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. The airport deal is award-winning and has been promoted by this Government.

The Speaker: You know what? If you would like to speak on it under Question [Period], you can raise it under Question [Period]. Okay?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will re-begin the paragraph.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, to understand how far we have come, we must first look back at where we started. In 2017, this Government inherited a country worn down by years of austerity. We inherited the

highest debt in Bermuda's history, a failed development in Morgan's Point that cost taxpayers more than \$200 million, and a bad airport deal. Public officers had been asked to make sacrifices, and there were 2,000 fewer jobs in our economy than in 2012. So, this Government [had] to work with an ambitious 100-day programme.

One promise the Government made was to ensure that our tax system is fairer and to ease the burden on working people. The previous OBA Administration had raised payroll taxes on workers to the highest level in our history. True to our word, this Government has consistently worked to ensure that workers keep more of the money they have earned, and through that work, we have brought payroll taxes for workers to the lowest level in history.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In history!

Hon. E. David Burt: Today, a worker earning \$48,000 pays 95 per cent less in payroll tax than they did before we took office,—

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and since 2017, the average Bermudian has saved over \$7,000 in payroll taxes. That is tangible progress that Bermudian workers and their families have felt in their pockets.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the changes that this Government has made for workers do not stop with payroll tax alone. We strengthened our trade unions and expanded protections against workplace bullying and harassment. We amended the Employment Act to extend paid maternity leave and introduced paid paternity leave for the first time in Bermuda's history, so that a Bermudian father no longer has to choose between his pay and being present for the first days of his child's life.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: For our father. Our new father!

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, this Government passed legislation that ensures tips and gratuities earned by workers stay in their pockets, not their employers'. And, Mr. Speaker, it was this Government that introduced the first statutory minimum wage in Bermuda's history to ensure that all workers are treated with fairness and protected from exploitation.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Keep going, Premier. Keep going! Remind them!

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, this Government recognised even before we took office, that as much as we take care of those currently working in our economy, we must also ensure that we take care of those who helped to build it, our seniors.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: While the former Administration had granted only a single pension increase in five years, this Government took a very different approach.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we did.

Hon. E. David Burt: During our nine years in office, this Government has increased seniors' pensions seven times in line with the rate of inflation, and this month we passed our eighth increase, which will take effect in August. Since we returned to office, the maximum contributory pension has risen by \$271 a month, over \$3,000 a year, supporting seniors—and that also includes our public sector retirees who have dutifully served our Island who had their pensions frozen since 2014.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: We delivered on our promise of a 10 per cent increase for public sector retirees while also making historic changes fixing the Public Service Superannuation Fund, which removed a \$2 billion unfunded liability from our balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker, caring also means [ensuring] that our seniors and other Bermudians who rely on Government-supported health insurance have access to the medical care and support they need. It was the previous Progressive Labour Party Government that first introduced FutureCare—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —to help our seniors meet the rising cost of healthcare in their golden years. On returning to office, this Government strengthened it.

Mr. Speaker, this PLP Government kept its promise to expand prescription drug coverage. Under FutureCare, we increased the annual prescription drug benefit from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Under HIP, we introduced a prescription drug benefit where none previously existed, and have since expanded it significantly. We have also removed the 12-month waiting period for the Personal Home Care benefit entirely, so seniors and other eligible policyholders can receive care in the comfort of their own homes from the day they need it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have now added a free annual health examination for HIP and FutureCare policyholders, and those persons on GEHI, without a co-pay. That is an important step toward early detection,

prevention, and better management of chronic conditions before they become emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, if [our] seniors are our foundation, our young people are our future, and we promised to invest in them.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we did.

Hon. E. David Burt: Where the previous Government had cut the education and scholarship budgets, we restored and increased them. We continue to advance the transformation of our public education system, opening signature schools that give Bermudian [students] specialised pathways built for the careers of tomorrow, and reopening Bermuda's first trade school in a generation through the Trades and Professions Signature at CedarBridge Academy, where, Mr. Speaker, the first class of those Trades and Professions programmes graduated at the end of last June.

Mr. Speaker, we also reversed the former Government's cuts to higher education funding. Through financial support and our College Promise programme, no Bermudian is denied access to Bermuda College because their family cannot afford it. We doubled scholarship funding from \$1.1 million in 2017 to \$2.2 million in this year's Budget, so more Bermudians can pursue higher education locally and overseas.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognise that not every Bermudian's path is the same. A fairer Bermuda must value technical education, trades, apprenticeships, and hands-on training just as much as university education. That is why this Government has expanded apprenticeships, strengthened workforce development programmes, created more pathways for Bermudians to earn, learn and train, and move into skilled jobs in our economy, supported, Mr. Speaker, by the Youth Employment Strategy, which has delivered a significant and measurable reduction in youth unemployment and is helping more young Bermudians secure meaningful opportunities for work and advancement.

Mr. Speaker, a fairer Bermuda must also be a safer one, and this Government understands that lasting safety is not achieved through enforcement alone, but by addressing the root causes of community violence. That is why, through our National Violence Reduction Strategy, we have invested directly in prevention. This year's [Budget] provided funding for education, counselling and outreach programmes delivered by our Violence Reduction Team, which has worked with dozens of public schools, and reached many more through mentorship and early intervention. This Government has provided \$2.5 million in capital development grants for community clubs to upgrade their infrastructure, and over \$670,000 in grants from the Confiscated Assets Fund to support youth programmes, because we recognise the value and importance of our community clubs to our young people.

Mr. Speaker, a fairer Bermuda also means a justice system that does not saddle our people with a lifetime of consequences for their past mistakes. Soon after taking office, this Government removed criminal sanctions for the possession of small amounts of cannabis, while creating a pathway for Bermudians carrying a criminal record for simple possession to have that record erased entirely.

Mr. Speaker, just as we invest in the education of our young people and support programmes and organisations that benefit them, we must also ensure that they, too, have a chance to own a home in the future. Through the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we have brought dozens of empty and derelict homes back online, when the previous OBA Government had delivered zero affordable houses in five years.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Come on.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, we launched the Mortgage Guarantee Programme, cutting the deposit a first-time Bermudian home buyers must find from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, and lowering their interest rate, which has already assisted over 60 Bermudians to purchase their first home.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: How many?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sixty Bermudians.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Sixty Bermudians!

Hon. E. David Burt: We raised the stamp duty exemption for first-time buyers to \$1 million and we removed the tax on mortgage refinancing, so that a family can switch their mortgage for a better mortgage rate without being penalised.

Mr. Speaker, while the Government cannot control prices, we have acted where we can to ease pressures on families. We removed the duty from dozens of essential food items, [and] launched the Affordable Bermuda Basket, working with wholesalers and retailers to cut the price of everyday goods at the register. We, Mr. Speaker, froze the price of fuel at the pump when global prices surged, while at the same point in time eliminating the tax on gasoline which the former Government doubled. And we also capped—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: —also capped excessive banking fees that had quietly drained family budgets for years.

And, Mr. Speaker, we expanded child [day] care allowance to families earning up to \$130,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, I hear chirping. Let the record reflect that the former Government cut the child day care allowance—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What?

Hon. E. David Burt: —from \$70,000 to \$50,000. But, Mr. Speaker, we expanded the child day care allowance to families earning up to \$130,000 a year so that parents no longer had to choose between going to work or staying home because of childcare costs.

Mr. Speaker, none of this is possible without a strong and well-managed economy. This Government delivered the first fiscal surplus in over two decades,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Say it again!

Hon. E. David Burt: —then, Mr. Speaker, we delivered a second one.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Say it again!

Hon. E. David Burt: We designed and implemented the new Corporate Income Tax regime, meeting the global minimum standard, while our competitors stood still.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: We are using that revenue responsibly to pay down \$605 million in debt—

An Hon. Member: Whew!

Hon. E. David Burt: —strengthening our financial position, while creating buffers for the future.

Mr. Speaker, that discipline is also allowing us to invest in the Island that Bermudians use every day. This Budget delivers the largest planned capital investment since [2008], with a \$182 million capital programme to rebuild and strengthen Bermuda's infrastructure. That means significant additional investment in public education facilities, affordable housing—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes!

Hon. E. David Burt: —roads, public buildings, water infrastructure, new ferries, the electrification of our bus fleet, and a new asphalt plant to support the ongoing work of improving Bermuda's roads.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And guess what, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: More? More?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: We secured a Moody's upgrade of our credit rating to A1—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah! Hey!

Hon. E. David Burt: —restoring the rating Bermuda lost under the previous Administration!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Cup Match time!

Hon. E. David Burt: We did not inherit this economy in good health. But we worked to return it to growth, record-low unemployment, stronger public finances, and greater confidence in Bermuda's future.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and the closure of our largest hotel left a significant gap. This Government worked to secure the largest tourism investment in Bermuda's history, and we are now on the verge of seeing the Fairmont Southampton reopen its doors.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Premier is misleading—

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the point of order is the Honourable Premier is misleading the House in suggesting that this was the first time that a government has attained government without debt.

In 2012, the OBA attained—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —government with a massive debt.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not a—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He is not the first to—

The Speaker: Wait, wait—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He's not the first to acquire a government that had debt. And it is because of that Government that we are in debt.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Okay—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You don't get in debt overnight.

The Speaker: You have the option of being able to address it under Question Period.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Honourable Former Premier. I know this is, you know, sensitive, and I am touching on the record—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —of approximately at the point in time that he was the Premier of the country.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Lost 2,000 jobs!

Hon. E. David Burt: You know, exactly. When he said we are going to create 2,000 jobs and lost 2,000 jobs. And, Mr. Speaker, it is important that the people who are listening hear . . . hear the sentence that I am delivering, Mr. Speaker. So, it is important. I will start at that paragraph again, if I may, Mr. Speaker. Because though the Honourable Member is saying that a government, this is [not] the first time a government has inherited debt, no government inherited a debt as much as we did, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: Record high debt, which was doubled under their term in office, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Doubled. Doubled!

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.
Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Premier is misleading the House. He knows full well, because we have discussed it several times, as has the Deputy Premier, that the Budget Book shows that we did not double the debt.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: And we are sitting here today with almost \$3 billion of PLP debt.

Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

The Speaker: That . . . that is a point—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: —that has been disputed back and forth on many occasions.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: On many occasions.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: I am sure you can address it in your comments . . . in your questions.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion is a double. They don't like it, but that's what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right!

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order. The Premier is misleading the House.

The numbers that he's given to the House are incorrect.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait one second, Premier.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: MP—

Mr. Scott Pearman: The numbers he just gave to the House are incorrect.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The numbers are in the Budget Book, and it is page C-29.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Honourable Member knows better than referring to those numbers, but I will go ahead and

give him the numbers when I . . . But I am going to continue with my Statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The President: Yes point—

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier is now imputing an improper motive. It is perfectly proper for me to refer to the budget numbers when correcting his misstatement to the House.

The Speaker: What he basically said is that you like to refer to the numbers. He didn't say anything inappropriate. You referred to the numbers, which you did.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion. The people of the country know what that means. Now, Mr. Speaker,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One and one is two.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order.

The Speaker: Uh, uh—

[Inaudible interjection]

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier is again misleading the House. The numbers that he has just given to the House are false.

The Speaker: What he said, he quoted two numbers just now. And he didn't attach them anywhere. He just could have said 10 and 12.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Let me finish. Let me finish. Sit down. Sit back down.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: He said 10 and 12. I'm going to use two numbers. And he said the people understand what 10 and 12 means. That's all he basically said. He didn't say . . . he didn't dispute your number. He didn't say what his number meant. He just said here are two numbers. And he moved on.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, if you're directing that he may make up numbers on the floor of the House, then so be it.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I'm not directing that he makes up numbers. I am expecting him to put down, as he's done in the past when this has come up . . . he's trying to present a case for the numbers. And that's what he was trying to present, his case for the numbers. And he keeps getting shut down. But . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Whip says I have got my preaching tie on today. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have my preaching tie on. Red and blue.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And I am going to bowl some bumpers all day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, sir!

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Bowl some bumpers.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me continue. Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic. And the closure of our largest hotel left a significant gap. This Government worked to secure the largest tourism investment in Bermuda's history. And we are now on the verge of seeing the Fairmount Southampton reopen its doors. Its reopening will further boost Bermuda's economy and strengthen our tourism product for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, we also promised to diversify our economy, and we are delivering. We have made Bermuda a global leader in digital finance, and last month we celebrated the landing of Google's Nuve and Sol subsea cable systems in Bermuda.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: This is a major vote of confidence from one of the world's leading technology companies that will result in \$100 million of investment in the East End, connecting Bermuda directly to the United States and Europe through a new transatlantic [subsea] infrastructure, and strengthen our Island's position in the global digital economy.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One hundred million.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, none of this happened by accident or overnight.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, it did not.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is the result of deliberate choices paired with prudent financial management [by] a Government determined to keep its election promises. I do not have the time today to cover every promise kept, but after nine years, the record speaks for itself.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, fairer taxes are not a promise for tomorrow. They are a reality today, with workers paying less and those able to pay more contributing their fair share. Protections for workers have been strengthened, and opportunities for Bermudians to earn, learn, and advance have been expanded.

Pensions have increased with the rate of inflation, and support for our seniors has been expanded. Access to health care has been improved, with greater coverage and a focus on prevention. Record investment is being made in affordable housing. Our infrastructure is being upgraded. Scholarship funding has doubled. Our economy is stronger, with record numbers of Bermudians employed in international business, and our debt is being reduced as we deliver budget surpluses, Mr. Speaker.

We do not say that every challenge has been solved. But after nine years, the record is clear. This Government has guided Bermuda through a once-in-a-century pandemic, restored stability to the public finances, and made deliberate choices to build a Bermuda that is fairer, stronger, and better prepared for the future.

Mr. Speaker, that work continues, and this Progressive Labour Party Government will carry it forward with the same determination and commitment that have carried us this far, as we continue to build a better and fairer Bermuda for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Would you like to present your Statement now?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Sure, Mr. Speaker. Let the good news continue.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of Cup Match thank you, Premier, for that beautiful outlining of the last nine years.

HOUSING PROGRAMME, PHASE 2 UPDATES

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with an [update on the Government's Housing](#)

[Infrastructure Projects Programme](#) and the next steps being taken under Phase 2 of this important initiative.

As Honourable Members are aware, Phase 1 of the Housing Infrastructure Projects Programme is currently underway, with several housing development projects progressing through various stages of implementation.

Building on the progress being made under Phase 1, the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities, working in partnership with the Bermuda Housing Corporation and the Bermuda Land Management Corporation, is now advancing Phase 2 of the Housing Infrastructure Projects Programme through the identification and assessment of additional sites for future housing development.

Mr. Speaker, the sites currently identified for consideration under Phase 2 include:

- Maria Hill, Sandy's Parish
- Tudor Hill, Southampton Parish
- Ocean View, Warwick
- Ewing Street, City of Hamilton
- Harbour View, St. David's

And of course, there is a . . . Government House 33-acre piece of property on North Shore that we will be looking at as well.

These sites already form part of the existing property portfolios of the Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] and the Bermuda Land Management Corporation [BLMC] and are being advanced through the collaborative efforts of both organisations. Collectively, these locations represent the next phase of the Government's efforts to increase housing opportunities across Bermuda through the strategic development of publicly owned properties already within the two 'quangos' housing portfolio. The sites have been identified based on their potential to contribute to the expansion of the Island's housing stock while supporting the broader objective of increasing access to affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, it is currently anticipated that Maria Hill, Tudor Hill, and Ewing Street could be developed primarily as affordable rental housing opportunities, while Ocean View—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: *Neriah*, yes, yes. *Neriah*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had a debate about *Neriah* or *Maria*. But you are right. It is *Neriah*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is currently anticipated that Maria Hill, Tudor Hill, and Ewing Street could be developed primarily as affordable rental housing opportunities, while Ocean View in Warwick and Harbourview are being contemplated for a homeownership development, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while these sites have now been identified, preparation work is still in early stages. Once the sites are confirmed, detailed assessments will be

undertaken to determine the most appropriate development approach for each location, including site layouts, building configurations, infrastructure requirements, housing mix, and ultimately the number of residential units that can be accommodated.

Mr. Speaker, we believe it is important to engage the public and surrounding communities early in this process. Housing developments become part of the fabric of the neighbourhoods in which they are built, and providing information about our intentions at this stage reflects our commitment to transparency and open communication. The proposed sites have not yet been finalized. By sharing this information now, residents can remain informed about the locations currently being advanced under Phase 2 and follow the evolution of these projects as planning progresses.

Community input will continue to play an important role as we move from concept planning toward implementation. To support this engagement, a public meeting is being planned for August, during which these sites, and potentially others under consideration, will be discussed. The meeting will provide an opportunity for residents to share their views and raise any concerns so they can be considered as early as possible in the process. While the date and venue have not yet been finalised, the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities will provide further details to the public as soon as they are confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to increasing housing opportunities across Bermuda. Through strategic infrastructure investments, careful planning, and collaboration across Government, we are creating the conditions necessary to deliver affordable rental housing, expand opportunities for home ownership, and strengthen communities throughout the Island.

These projects represent more than the development of land. They represent an investment in Bermuda's people, our communities, and our future. By making targeted investments in housing infrastructure today, we are laying the foundation for stronger, more resilient communities tomorrow.

The Ministry looks forward to providing further updates to this Honourable House as work progresses on these important initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

PARENT CYBER SAFETY AND DIGITAL WELLNESS COURSES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an [update on the work being advanced](#) by the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, through The Office of Youth Affairs [TOYA], to support Bermuda's young people and their families in a rapidly changing digital environment.

Technology is now part of everyday life for our children and young people. It supports learning, communication, creativity, research, entertainment, and connection. It requires balance, guidance, and practical support at home. Many parents and guardians are trying to guide children through rapidly changing online spaces. They are managing screen time, social media pressure, gaming, online friendships, artificial intelligence, privacy concerns, and digital habits that can affect sleep, confidence, focus, and family relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as online engagement increases during the summer months and continues throughout the school year, The Office of Youth Affairs is taking practical steps to help parents and guardians foster safer, healthier digital habits. The One Bermuda Alliance previously asked when the course would be held, and this update follows up on that inquiry. I can confirm that The Office of Youth Affairs is advancing the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness course series for delivery during the summer and fall.

The decision to begin during the summer is intentional. When school is out, many young people have more unscheduled time, increased device use, and greater exposure [to] online content as school routines pause. The fall continuation will provide further support as young people return to school, settle into academic routines, and continue balancing learning, recreation, family life, and online engagement.

Mr. Speaker, feedback from youth engagement activities, including the Big Up Yaself National Mini-Youth Conference 2026, confirmed that screen time, social media, online safety, and digital wellness remain concerns for young people and families.

The Ministry focuses its response on practical action. Parents and guardians need clear information, usable tools, and accessible opportunities to ask questions. Young people need guidance that helps them make the most of technology while understanding safety, responsibility, boundaries, and self-care.

Digital wellness is also part of youth mental health. What young people see, share, absorb, and experience online can affect anxiety, mood, sleep, self-image, attention, and relationships. Supporting healthy digital habits is one way to strengthen the protective network around Bermuda's children and adolescents.

Mr. Speaker, the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness courses are designed as a capacity-building initiative for parents and guardians. The sessions will help families better understand the online spaces young people use, the potential risks, and practical

steps they can take at home. The course offerings will include sessions on healthy summer social media habits, managing screen time at home, understanding the platforms young people use, recognising online risks, cybersecurity basics for families, digital privacy, artificial intelligence and digital literacy, online safety, digital wellbeing, and family resilience.

Including artificial intelligence and digital literacy is important. Young people are already interacting with AI tools, edited content, automated recommendations, and online information that may not always be accurate, safe, or age appropriate. Parents need support to understand these changes without feeling overwhelmed by technical language.

Mr. Speaker, parents and guardians will also receive support to strengthen conversations at home. This includes how to speak with young people about online friendships, privacy, cyberbullying, harmful content, misinformation, unhealthy comparisons, sleep disruption, digital pressure, and the impact online engagement can have on confidence, focus, and mental health.

These courses are practical, accessible, and useful. The aim is for parents and guardians to leave with simple tools they can apply immediately. This may include setting reasonable boundaries, creating healthy routines, recognising warning signs, encouraging responsible online conduct, and helping young people make balanced choices. Parents do not need to know every app to protect their child. They need awareness, conversations, boundaries, and support.

Mr. Speaker, the evening courses will follow the summer day programs. This schedule recognises that many parents and guardians work during the day and require an accessible opportunity to attend, ask questions, and receive support. Young people will participate in supervised evening recreation activities. These activities will provide a free zone from electronics and will offer positive, healthy, social, and recreational alternatives to screen time. This is an important part of the approach. We cannot ask young people to reduce screen time without also providing meaningful alternatives. Recreation, creativity, physical activity, social connection, and community engagement remain essential parts of youth development.

By pairing parent education with youth recreation, The Office of Youth Affairs is supporting the whole family. Parents and guardians will build knowledge and confidence, while young people will have structured opportunities to spend time away from devices in a safe and engaging environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry views this initiative as part of a broader prevention and early-intervention approach. The goal is to support parents before they feel overwhelmed, guide young people before digital online habits become unhealthy, and strengthen families before digital pressures negatively affect wellbeing.

This work is about helping young people use technology safely and responsibly. It is also about

ensuring that parents and guardians do not feel left behind as technology continues to change. New platforms, online trends, digital risks, and emerging tools such as artificial intelligence continue to shape the world in which our young people are growing up. The Office of Youth Affairs helps families keep pace through practical education and community-based support.

Mr. Speaker, The Office of Youth Affairs will continue to complete the course schedule and confirm the delivery dates for the summer and fall sessions. Parents, guardians, community partners, and programme participants will receive the promotion directly. Parents and guardians who wish to learn more, register interest, or receive updates on the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness courses should contact The Office of Youth Affairs by telephone at 246-9100 or by email at youthpolicy@gov.bm.

Through these courses, the Ministry is taking practical steps to support families, strengthen the protective network around Bermuda's children and adolescents, provide meaningful alternatives to excessive screen time, and promote digital wellness in our homes and communities.

Mr. Speaker, our children deserve to be protected in every space where they learn, play, connect, and grow. That includes the digital spaces they enter every day. Through these courses, the Ministry is supporting parents, strengthening families, and helping Bermuda's young [people] build healthier relationships with technology.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.

EMANCIPATION COMMEMORATION 2026

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, as Bermuda prepares to observe the Cup Match holiday, we are reminded that [these two days](#) represent far more than a cherished sporting tradition. They invite us to remember the painful legacy of enslavement, honour the resilience of our ancestors, and reflect on the freedoms that were so hard won.

Mr. Speaker, the first day of the holiday is Emancipation Day, marking the abolition of enslavement in Bermuda and commemorating those who endured enslavement while never losing hope for freedom. The second day is Mary Prince Day, when we honour one of Bermuda's National Heroes, whose

courage of telling her story helped advance the abolitionist cause across the British Empire.

Mr. Speaker, the legacy of Mary Prince extends well beyond the pages of history. As the first woman of African descent to publish an autobiography, her narrative, *The History of Mary Prince*, ensured that the realities of enslavement could not be dismissed or forgotten. Her voice continues to remind us of the importance of truth, courage, and the enduring value of human dignity. As Bermudians, we take pride in knowing that one of our own helped shape a movement that changed lives far beyond our shores.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture has once again curated a calendar of events to mark the commemoration of [emancipation]. Featuring both Departmental and community-led events, it offers opportunities for learning, remembrance, and community engagement. The full calendar is available to view at culture.bm.

Mr. Speaker, amongst these events is one of our signature offerings: the premiere of a documentary film *Black Enterprise in Bermuda: Trials, Tribulations, Triumphs*, which celebrates the ingenuity, resilience, and achievements of Black Bermudians in business across generations. This film has been created for the Department of Culture by Marquedelle Rodriguez in collaboration with historian and researcher Meredith Ebbin.

Mr. Speaker, [commemorating] Emancipation is not solely about remembering the hardships of the past. It is also about recognising the extraordinary accomplishments of Black Bermudians, whose perseverance, talent, and leadership have helped build the Bermuda we know today. It is also about carrying forward the values of freedom, equity, and respect so that future generations inherit a more just and inclusive Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day, let us honour our history with honesty, celebrate the resilience of those who came before us, and carry their legacy forward with pride.

Mr. Speaker, on the sporting side of the upcoming Emancipation celebrations, in just two weeks, on 30 and 31 July, Bermuda will once again come together to celebrate a cherished and time-honoured tradition, the Annual Cup Match Classic. This iconic event unites us as a community, transcending boundaries of age, race, and background as we celebrate our shared love of cricket, camaraderie, and the vibrant culture that makes our Island so unique.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly the time of year when the spirit of rivalry and unity shines the brightest. Workplaces and homes, as we see in here today, Mr. Speaker, are [proudly] adorned in light blue and dark blue or dark blue, red, blue . . . all sorts of colours, Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Red.

The Speaker: Red and Blue.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I missed the red?

[Crosstalk]

An Hon. Member: Yes, you missed red. Come on now, you can do better.

The Speaker: It's red and blue.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Oh, I am sorry. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Let me try that again.

The Speaker: Red and blue.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Light blue and dark blue—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —or red and blue.

The Speaker: Correct.

An Hon. Member: See that?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Got that fixed for you.

[Laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —while supporters dress from head to toe in their team colours.

Even my MP in the wrong colour over there.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I noticed you aren't wearing any today, everyone else has got on their favourite colours.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: We'll get to County game a little later, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —up at East End. That's what I'll conclude.

Hon. Owen Darrell: It is certainly [the] one time of year when wearing the wrong colours, Mr. Speaker, will almost certainly result in some good-natured teasing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to this year's host, the Somerset Cricket Club—

[Cheering and desk thumping]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —under the leadership of President Mr. Richard Scott, his committee, the organisers, sponsors, and the countless volunteers who are working tirelessly to make this year's Cup Match a success.

Each year, the Government is pleased to provide financial assistance to the host club to support the delivery of this beloved national event, and this year is no exception. While we look forward to the excitement and celebration of Cup Match, the Government also wants to ensure that everyone can enjoy the festivities safely.

To that end, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport have committed \$70,000 in total funding to support Somerset Cricket Club in hosting this year's event, including funding for a professional engineering company to inspect and certify the safety of the scaffolding structures erected for the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the President of St. George's Cricket Club,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —Neil Paynter, who has returned to the role after a brief break, along with his executive, volunteers, players and supporters. The dedication and commitment shown by both clubs to ensure that Cup Match remains one of Bermuda's most treasured annual traditions is admirable.

Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the much anticipated 28th edition of the Annual Mini Cup Match, hosted this year by the Department of Sport and Recreation. This celebrated event will take place on Friday, 24 July, at the Somerset Cricket Club.

This year's match will see the defending champions, Somerset, take on St. George's, with the first ball scheduled for 10:30 [am]. The young cricketers, aged 8 to 14, have spent the past few weeks preparing as part of the Department's Next Innings. Summer Day Camp. They have been coached by former Cup Match players Rodney "Picnic" Trott and Coolridge "Coolie" Durham, together with the camp's dedicated staff.

Each year, Mini Cup Match provides not only an exciting day of cricket but also a glimpse into the bright future of the sport in Bermuda. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to CG Insurance for once again serving as sponsors [and] for their continued investment in developing our young cricketers.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the public to fully embrace the spirit of Cup Match by attending the final Cup Match trials at both clubs on Saturday, 25 July, and remaining for the eagerly anticipated team selections later that evening. I also encourage the public to support the future stars of our national game by attending the Colts Cup Match on Sunday, 26 July, at 11:00 am at the Somerset Cricket Club.

Like so many Bermudians, I look forward to attending the Cup Match trials, visiting families and

friends as they prepare their campsites over the coming weeks, and enjoying the unique atmosphere that this time of year brings. Mr. Speaker, I know we can all agree that it is truly special.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate in the longstanding pre-match tradition of greeting the players and officials before the first ball is bowled. It is a privilege to be part of a ceremony, and it marks the beginning of one of Bermuda's most cherished national traditions.

Cup Match is far more than cricket. It is a celebration of our history, our resilience, and our shared identity as Bermudians. It reminds us of the bonds that unite us through heritage, pride, and community. It is a time when families, friends, neighbours, and even strangers, Mr. Speaker, come together to create lasting memories and strengthen the connections that make Bermuda a special place.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate this year's Cup Match holiday, let us also take time to reflect on the deeper meaning. It is for the struggles and sacrifices of those who came before us. They remind us of the importance of unity, respect, and resilience.

Cup Match is an occasion that truly brings everyone together. Whether it is Somerset, whether it is St. George's, whether you are cricketing, whether you are camping with your family and friends, or simply enjoying the holiday, we are united in celebrating what it means to be Bermudian.

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, I wish both teams every success, congratulate everyone who has worked tirelessly to make this celebration possible, and encourage all Bermudians to celebrate responsibly, supporting our young athletes. Enjoy a safe, memorable, and joyful Cup Match holiday.

Happy Cup Match to all!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, I believe the next Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue?

BERMUDA'S RIDESHARING PROGRAMME, PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a further [update on Bermuda's ridesharing programme](#), launched on 10 June 2026 to expand transportation options and advance the Government's transportation modernisation agenda.

Mr. Speaker, when this Government introduced regulated ridesharing, we did so with a clear principle in mind: taxis first, ridesharing when needed.

This policy was designed not to displace Bermuda's taxi operators, but to complement their service by addressing transportation gaps during peak periods

of demand. By providing additional capacity when it is most needed, Mr. Speaker, we are helping to ensure that both residents and visitors have reliable access to transportation, particularly during evenings, weekends, public holidays, major events, and other times when residents and visitors may experience difficulty securing transportation.

I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the early results are positive and indicate that the introduction of regulated ridesharing is achieving its intended purpose.

Mr. Speaker, between 10 June and 15 July 2026, Bermuda's ridesharing programme recorded 1,466 rides, averaging approximately 41 rides per day during its first five weeks of operation.

Early adoption was strong, with 220 rides completed during the programme's first six days. By 15 July, cumulative ridership had risen to 1,466 [rides], demonstrating sustained growth and increasing public uptake. The highest single-day total was recorded on 11 July, when 105 rides were completed.

Mr. Speaker, interest in the programme also continues to grow. To date, approximately 100 applications have been submitted for participation in Bermuda's ridesharing programme. Approximately 30 applicants have been approved, with the remaining applications continuing to move through the required review and processing stages.

While the Ministry is working to process applications efficiently, it is also important, Mr. Speaker, that this is done properly. Each application must be reviewed against the established requirements, including Bermuda Police Service vetting, public service vehicle licensing, vehicle inspection, insurance, and other safety and operational standards. This due diligence is essential to protect passengers, support public confidence, and ensure the programme expands responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, the location data indicates that ridesharing activity across Bermuda, includes hotels, restaurants, beaches, residential neighbourhoods, Hamilton, Dockyard, St. George's, the airport, medical facilities, shopping areas and community locations.

This is significant because ridesharing was never intended to serve just a single purpose. It was introduced to provide an additional transportation option within Bermuda's broader transportation network and to enhance the mobility of both visitors and residents.

For visitors, the data demonstrates that ridesharing is facilitating travel from hotels, guest properties, restaurants, beaches, the airport and other key visitor destinations. At least 268 rides involved identifiable hotels, resorts, guest properties or visitor accommodations. This demonstrates that the programme is already contributing to Bermuda's tourism product and helping to improve the visitor experience.

While the tourism benefits are evident, the data also highlights the value of ridesharing for Bermuda

residents. Usage patterns show activity across Paget, Warwick, Southampton, Devonshire, Smith's, St. George's, Sandys, Somerset, Dockyard and Hamilton, with many rides involving residential roads, neighbourhoods, and everyday destinations. This confirms that residents are also embracing ridesharing as a practical transportation option, using the service for travel to and from homes, medical facilities, shopping areas, restaurants, events and community locations.

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Overall, the figures being shared today, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, present a positive picture of growing adoption and meaningful use of the ridesharing service. These patterns of use demonstrate that ridesharing is already making a measurable impact and fulfilling its intended purpose, expanding transportation choice and providing a flexible and convenient, as well as accessible service that benefits both residents and visitors throughout Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is exactly the kind of impact that the Government intended. Ridesharing is helping visitors move around the Island, while also giving residents another option when they need transport. It is helping to fill gaps, improve access and provide additional capacity when and where it is needed. Importantly, ridesharing is also supporting Bermuda's taxi industry.

Since the launch, ridesharing has completed more than 1,000 passenger movements. These are rides that otherwise [may] have placed additional pressure on the existing taxi network during busy periods, evenings, weekends, events and higher visitor days. By helping to absorb this additional demand, ridesharing is supporting the wider transportation system and helping to reduce the risk of passengers being left without transportation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, prior to the introduction of rideshare, one of the recurring concerns in busy periods was the difficulty in securing transportation, or long waits, or being unable to get a ride when needed. Following the launch of rideshare, the Ministry has not seen the same level of public concern regarding passengers being stranded, experiencing long waits, or [being] unable to get transportation. While this will continue to be monitored, it is an encouraging early indication that the additional ridesharing capacity is helping to ease the pressure on the transportation network.

This also supports the reputation of Bermuda's taxi industry. Taxis remain the first and central transportation option, while ridesharing provides a regulated supplemental service to help absorb the additional demand and reduce the likelihood of negative passenger experiences during high-demand periods.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry remains committed to ensuring that ridesharing operators are operating within a regulated and responsible framework. All ridesharing operators remain subject to

Government oversight, including the public service vehicle licensing requirements, vehicle inspections, insurance requirements and operational standards established by the Transport Control Department and the Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board. The Ministry and the Transport Control Department will continue to monitor ride data, operator participation, stakeholder feedback and passenger experience as the programme continues to develop.

Madam Deputy Speaker, reliable transportation is fundamental to the quality of life of our residents and to the experience of those who visit our Island. Early results indicate that it is gaining traction, with measurable evidence of utilisation. The service is expanding transportation options and providing residents with greater convenience and flexibility in their travel choices.

This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to modernising Bermuda's transportation network, delivering safe, reliable and accessible transportation solutions, practical and improved transportation options.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the next Minister, the Minister of Works.

Minister.

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAMME: BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the 2026/27 financial year, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment has been allocated \$3 million to establish a [new Community Beautification Programme](#).

This initiative has one clear purpose: To deliver practical improvements that people can see, use and appreciate in the communities where they live, while giving Members of Parliament a direct mechanism to champion the priorities of their constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Government is often judged by the major projects it delivers. But the public also judges us by the everyday experience of living in Bermuda. They notice the overgrown verge that reduces visibility on a busy road, the broken bench in a neighbourhood park, the peeling railing, the damaged playground equipment or the missing road sign. While each may seem minor on its own, together they shape how people experience the communities they call home. That is precisely why this programme is so important.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry already operates an extensive maintenance programme that touches every part of Bermuda. Every day, our officers maintain roads, bridges, public buildings, parks,

beaches, railway trails, seawalls, drains and countless other public assets. They deliver planned maintenance, respond to emergencies and undertake the capital projects that keep our Island functioning.

It is an ongoing responsibility that requires our teams to continually balance planned maintenance with the unexpected demands that arise each day. The reality is that approximately 500 dedicated public officers are responsible for maintaining virtually every aspect of Government's public infrastructure. They perform this work with professionalism and commitment while balancing routine maintenance, emergency response and major capital projects across the Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even the best maintenance programmes must remain flexible. A crew scheduled to carry out planned work in the morning may instead be called away to respond to an emergency, such as a water main break. Those urgent situations cannot wait. And when they arise, other planned work must inevitably be rescheduled. Rather than accepting those constraints as inevitable, this Government has chosen to respond with a practical solution: The Community Beautification Programme.

The Community Beautification Programme is not intended to replace the Ministry's existing maintenance programme, nor is it an accusation that our officers are not doing enough. Quite the opposite. It recognises [the] outstanding work already being carried out across Bermuda while creating an additional pathway to deliver the smaller community improvements that residents value most.

For the first time, Members of Parliament will have a dedicated mechanism to identify and prioritise local projects on behalf of their constituents. Rather than these requests entering the wider maintenance programme and competing with emergency works and major infrastructure projects, they will be considered through a separate programme with its own funding and delivery framework. Quite simply, this gives Government another practical way to respond to the needs of our communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the programme has been deliberately designed around projects that are practical, repeatable and capable of being delivered efficiently by the Ministry. These are projects that generally fall within the Ministry's existing authority and do not require lengthy approvals from other regulatory agencies, allowing us to move more quickly from request to completion.

Eligible works will include, but are not limited to

- community clean-ups and the maintenance of public spaces;
- landscaping and vegetation management;
- repairs and repainting of public railings, guardrails and fences;
- repairs to playground equipment;
- installation and repair of public benches, trash cans, picnic tables and bicycle racks;
- improvements to public signage; and

- small public safety enhancements, including the installation and repair of roadside traffic mirrors.

These projects may not always attract headlines, but they will make a meaningful difference to the daily lives of Bermudians. They will improve neighbourhood parks, enhance public safety, strengthen community spaces and help ensure that the places people use every day are clean, safe and well maintained. Sometimes the greatest impact Government can make comes through the consistent delivery of the small improvements that people experience every day.

Madam Deputy Speaker, delivering these projects also requires additional capacity. Accordingly, the Ministry will fund a modest expansion of the Bermuda Housing Corporation's Helping the Unemployed Sustain Themselves with Limited Employment, better known as the H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck Programme—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: —through the addition of one new truck and a dedicated support team.

The H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck Programme has quietly become an excellent example of what Government can achieve through partnership. It provides employment opportunities, develops practical skills and enables Bermudians to contribute directly to improving the communities in which they live. At the same time, it has become an invaluable partner in delivering community-based projects across the Island.

Demand for the H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck's services continues to grow, and this investment recognises both its success and its potential. Working alongside Ministry crews and private contractors, the additional truck and support team will increase our capacity to deliver beautification projects more efficiently and more consistently.

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the Community Beautification Programme is expected to commence in August. Detailed programme guidelines, including funding allocations and project submission procedures, will be circulated to all Members of Parliament next week.

This programme will not solve every maintenance challenge overnight, nor is it intended to. What it will do is provide Members of Parliament with a practical new tool to address the everyday concerns raised by their constituents while improving the appearance, safety and functionality of public spaces across Bermuda.

Strong communities are built not only through major infrastructure projects, but also through consistent attention to the places where people live, work and gather every day.

A cleaner park.

A repaired bench.

A freshly painted railing.

A safer roadside.

A neighbourhood that reflects the pride of the people who call it home.

Those improvements may seem small in isolation, but together they help strengthen communities, build civic pride and reinforce public confidence that Government is responding to the issues that matter most in people's daily lives.

The Community Beautification Programme reflects a simple belief: When Government pays attention to the everyday things, people gain confidence that the bigger things are being looked after as well.

That is the standard this Government has set out for itself, and it is the standard we intend to deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Education.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Good morning, colleagues.

CAMBRIDGE CHECKPOINT REPORT FOR BERMUDA, 2023–2025: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ACTION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I rise today, having recently returned to the Office of Minister of Education, to inform this Honourable House that the Ministry of Education has officially released this report, the Cambridge Checkpoint Report for Bermuda 2023–2025, prepared by Cambridge International Education. The [full report](#) is now available on the Ministry of Education website at www.moed.bm.

Mr. Speaker, this report was the subject of a formal request under the Public Access to Information Act 2010. Consistent with this Government's commitment to transparency, and with my own commitment on returning to this portfolio, I have requested that the report be released today in full to the public, accompanied by a plain-language guide for parents.

Mr. Speaker, the Cambridge Checkpoint assessments are internationally benchmarked diagnostic tools that measure student attainment in English, Mathematics, and Science against clearly defined global standards. Cambridge International Education itself has told us, and I quote, that these assessments are best used "to focus supportive activity and resources on specific areas of improvement rather than for the purposes of accountability, for which the tests and testing schedules are not designed or best suited." That is

an important framing, Mr. Speaker, because the value of this report lies not in judgment, but in direction.

Mr. Speaker, let me first speak to what is going well. Overall student attainment has remained broadly stable over the three-year reporting period, with a consistent proportion of our students achieving in the highest performance bands, categorised as "High" and "Outstanding."

English continues to stand out as a strong area of performance across both Primary and Lower Secondary levels. Over 65 per cent of our Lower Secondary English students, and over 50 per cent of our Primary English students, have performed at strong bands consistently across the three years covered by this report. Students are demonstrating solid literacy foundations, especially in reading, which remains a key pillar of academic success. This reflects the sustained efforts of our teachers, school leaders, and support staff, as well as the important role of families who read with their children at home.

Mr. Speaker, I will also speak plainly about where further work is needed. While overall attainment has been maintained, the report identifies a gradual decline in average scores in some subject areas, alongside a widening gap between high-performing students and those requiring additional support. This widening distribution is most evident in Mathematics and Science, where a growing proportion of students are performing in the lower bands, alongside a reduction of those achieving at mid-level.

In Mathematics, performance remains uneven across strands, indicating the need for more targeted instructional approaches. In Science, outcomes are mixed. Lower Secondary performance remains broadly balanced, while Primary Science, particularly Chemistry, requires more focused attention.

Writing in English, while supported by strong reading foundations, requires strengthening across the system. Importantly, the data confirms that some performance gaps persist year-on-year, regardless of the cohort. This tells us that [these] challenges require a system-wide response, not individual scapegoating. That is precisely how this Ministry will address them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak clearly and directly to our teachers, our principals, and all school-based staff who serve our students every day. This report is not a judgment of you. Cambridge International Education itself has told us these assessments are diagnostic tools, designed to identify where students need support, not to judge individual educators or rank individual schools.

But let me be equally clear. Mr. Speaker, the fact that Cambridge is diagnostic does not mean that accountability is absent. Accountability in our public education system rests where it properly belongs, with the Ministry, with the Department of Education, and ultimately with the Minister who stands before this House today. Progress and improvement are expected.

Measurable outcomes are expected. And this Ministry accepts that expectation without qualification.

To parents listening today: if you have concerns about your child's progress, please speak to your child's teacher or principal. A plain-language, parent-friendly guide is being formatted to accompany this report, helping every family understand these findings and how they can support their child at home. Parents remain our most important partners in this work.

Mr. Speaker, I do not stand here today to point fingers. I stand here to point forward. The responsibility for improving outcomes belongs to all of us, that is the Government, educators, families, and the community, and this Ministry accepts that share of responsibility fully.

A clear programme of targeted action is underway:

1. Strengthening Mathematics instruction through focused instructional strategies and professional development to support teachers in addressing identified learning gaps.
2. Expanding writing across the curriculum, so that students write more, more often, and receive clear feedback in every subject.
3. Enhancing Science teaching and learning, with particular emphasis on Primary Science, especially Chemistry.
4. Enhanced analysis of subject- and strand-level performance data to inform classroom practice, targeted especially at students in the lower performance bands.
5. Strengthening the Multi-Tiered System of Support, so that struggling learners are identified earlier and supported sooner.
6. Data-driven School Improvement Plans in every school, aligned with system-wide literacy and numeracy targets.
7. Leadership stability—continuing to ensure that every primary and middle school in the Bermuda Public School System is led by a substantively appointed principal, ending a prolonged period of acting appointments.
8. Structured, ongoing consultation with the Bermuda Union of Teachers and the BPSU (who represent the School Principals) in every element of the response. Reform delivered on teachers is not reform. Reform delivered with teachers is.
9. Continued use of Checkpoint assessment data as a diagnostic tool to drive ongoing school improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I will report back to this Honourable House on the specific interventions announced today with measurable outcomes within 12 months. That is my commitment to this House, to our teachers, to our parents, and above all to our students.

Mr. Speaker, I close with this. We do not have a broken system. We have a system with real strengths, identified challenges, dedicated educators,

engaged families, and children who deserve every ounce of our commitment. That is not brokenness. That is the honest starting point of the work ahead. Our children can read. Our educators are working hard. Our system has real strengths. But too many children are struggling in Mathematics and Writing, and we will not accept that. That is why we are releasing this report today, and that is why we are acting on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue with your second Statement?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with an update on the [Education Authority Bill](#), its purpose, how it will be established, what the passage of the Bill will and will not do, and the pathway to its introduction to this Chamber in September.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of an Education Authority is among the most significant governance reforms contemplated for our [public] education system in a generation.

Mr. Speaker, before I turn to the Bill, I want to place it in its proper context. The Education Authority has always been a part of this Government's education reform agenda. It is not a new idea, nor a [departure] from the reform programme underway. It is the governance foundation that the broader reform programme has long required, a piece of structural work that, once delivered, allows every other reform effort to be sustained, strengthened, and protected over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan project. Successive governments have identified the need for stronger governance and clearer accountability in our public education system. This Bill builds upon that shared analysis and on the reform work already underway, and it does what earlier efforts could not. It places the governance framework for public education into statute, where it can endure beyond any single administration.

Mr. Speaker, before I turn to the structure of the Bill, I want to be clear about its purpose. This reform exists for one reason: To build a public education system that serves the children of Bermuda better than it does today. Every child in our public schools deserves to learn in a system that is well-governed, professionally led, and focused unwaveringly on their outcomes—

in literacy, in numeracy, in wellbeing, and in life chances that carry them into adulthood. That is what this reform is for. Governance change is the means. Better outcomes for our students is the end.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Authority Bill will establish, in statute, the Bermuda Education Authority, a statutory body corporate to lead the Bermuda Public School System. The Authority is designed to be

- an Authority—a public body held at arm's length from day-to-day politics;
- governed by a merit-based Board—nine appointed members with defined, statutory expertise;
- commencing in legislated stages—beginning with a defined first stage of 18 months; and
- accountable to Parliament—through public board meetings and annual reports laid before Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a rebranding exercise. It is not the movement of names on an organisational chart. It is a carefully designed structural reform, delivered in defined stages, to address long-standing challenges in the governance and accountability of our public education system.

Some will ask what an Education Authority adds to the reform work already underway. The answer is durability. An Education Authority provides continuity across political cycles. It provides a governance structure whose remit is education, and only education. It provides long-term stewardship of the system, insulated from the pressures of short political timescales. It provides a single, accountable point of professional leadership at the top of the public school system. These are structural strengths that will protect the reform work already delivered and give the reform work ahead the foundation it needs to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said in public commentary about the concept of independence in [relation] to this Authority. Today, I want to speak plainly to this House about what independence means in practice. Educational independence is a function of how a system is governed, not merely who funds it. The Authority will be a [public] statutory body, funded by the Government and answerable to the Minister and to Parliament, not a private entity. That is entirely consistent with independent and professional governance.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill adopts what is known as a quasi-autonomous public body model, commonly known as a quango. A structure will be held at arm's length from Government, which is used across the Commonwealth for public functions that require independence from day-to-day political direction while remaining publicly funded and publicly accountable. The independence of the Authority is protected through several structural features written into the Bill, such as:

- A merit-based Board of nine voting members with defined statutory expertise—that includes educational expertise, expertise in supporting vulnerable students, a Bermuda College

representative, and private and public-sector experience, with the Commissioner of Education as a non-voting, ex officio member. Appointments will be advertised and merit based.

- Clearly defined statutory powers and duties, so that the public, Parliament, and the Authority itself understand precisely where its remit begins and ends.
- The Authority's substantive operational design will be developed by the Board itself, in consultation with stakeholders—not by political actors on the Board's behalf.
- A governance framework designed to endure beyond any single administration. Legislation this significant must serve Bermuda's children regardless of which party forms the Government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, these are not aspirations. These are the design features of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill provides for the establishment of the Authority in four defined, legislated stages. This is a deliberate design choice, one intended to ensure that reform is delivered thoughtfully, consultatively, and with appropriate legal safeguards at every step.

Stage 1—Establish

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 1 (that is, the first 18 months following commencement, with a single limited 12-month extension available) establishes the Authority as a body corporate, appoints the Board, and begins planning and consultation.

During Stage 1, the Board will

- prepare the proposed School Board framework for all schools to use—designing the model and consulting on it; but [establishment] follows in later stages;
- design the future organisational structure of the Authority;
- consult widely, by engaging unions, aided schools, parents, and the community; and
- recommend the onward pathway for Stages 2, 3, and 4.

Stage 2—Structure

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 2 (which will follow Stage 1 and will require further legislation) develops the operational structure, builds the proposed School Board's framework, and undertakes workforce planning. Stage 2 will require further legislation, which will only be brought to this Honourable House after the Board has completed its Stage 1 consultation.

Stage 3—Transfer

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 3 transfers the function of the Department of Education to the Authority, and School Boards become operational.

Stage 4—Full Control

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 4 marks the abolition of the Department of Education and the Authority's assumption of full operational control for the Bermuda Public School System.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear here. Stage 2 will require further legislation and consultation before we proceed. That will be a legal requirement, not a political promise.

Mr. Speaker, these stages are not procedural for their own sake. Each stage exists to build a system that delivers the desired accountability, better teaching, stronger school leadership, faster decision-making, and improved outcomes for the children in our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, having set out what the Bill will do, and the four stages through which the Authority will be established, I want to turn now to what the passage of this Bill in September will not do, because clarity on both is equally important. This is important for our teachers, for our principals, for our public officers, for our aided schools, and for the parents and students who rely on the stability of our education system every day.

The passage of the Bill will start Stage 1, which is to establish the Authority in law and provide for the appointment of its independent, merit-based Board. It will not, of itself, produce the operational transfers. That come in later stages. Specifically, Stage 1 does not

- transfer employees out of the Public Service;
- change employees' terms and conditions;
- change collective bargaining arrangements;
- abolish the Board of Education;
- establish School Boards;
- change any employee's employment status; and
- aided schools will remain, as they are today, on their own distinct footing.

Mr. Speaker, any change to employment arrangements and Aided School operations occurs at a later, legislated stage, with consultation and legal protection.

Mr. Speaker, stability in Stage 1 is not merely a reassurance to staff and aided schools. It is a promise to our students that their education will not be disrupted by the very reforms designed to improve it.

Mr. Speaker, consultation on this reform is not a matter of ministerial promise. It is a matter of statute. The Bill includes three principal safeguards.

- No progression without consultation: We will not proceed to Stage 2 legislation without consultation with the affected stakeholders.
- This involves a statutory duty to consult: The Board must consult on the future School Board

model, workforce framework, and organisational design.

- A “table-or-[explain]” obligation: Before the first stage expires, the Government must table the next stage’s legislation or publicly explain the delay.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney-General’s Chambers has advised on the legal pathway, and the staged approach is designed to be legally sound at every step.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak directly about our aided schools, whose leaders I met with earlier this week. Nothing changes for aided schools during Stage 1. Aided schools’ governance, funding relationship, and distinct character are unaffected during Stage 1.

Mr. Speaker, the aided schools are recognised in the Act as a distinct policy issue, to be addressed on their own right, not simply folded into general reform. The Authority will be under a statutory duty to consult them, and their long experience of independent school-level governance will provide valuable input as the Board designs the future School Board framework for the wider public school system.

Mr. Speaker, since returning to the Education portfolio, my priority has been to engage directly and meaningfully with those most affected by this legislation. I have personally met with and spoken to the Bermuda Union of Teachers; the Bermuda Public Services Union; and all of our aided schools and various individuals who were part of the wider consultation on the development of the Education Authority recommendations. The purpose of those meetings was to reconvene the Education Authority engagement process, to provide a full and honest update, and to outline the road ahead. I am happy to report that those meetings were favourably received.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the history behind this work openly. Substantive engagement took place between 2021 and 2024, and those contributions have informed the current draft Bill. Following a change in ministerial portfolios in [early] 2025, that Working Group was stood down. Following the most recent change in ministerial portfolios two weeks ago, the Working Group’s data and the drafting status of the Education Authority Bill have been reviewed and that work has now reconvened with the same partners.

Mr. Speaker, I have also offered His Majesty’s [Loyal] Opposition the same briefing provided to our unions and aided schools. I have also restarted the Opposition Education WhatsApp group that existed before my move to the Cabinet Office. The offer to be collaborative is open and I welcome the Opposition to take it up. I also remain confident that on a matter of this importance to Bermuda’s children, we can find common ground.

Mr. Speaker, the pathway ahead is straightforward:

- September Session—the Bill is tabled in the House of Assembly.

- Commencement—Stage 1 begins and runs 18 months, with an optional one-month *[sic]* extension.
- Later stages—Stage 2 requires further legislation, after consultation.
- Full transition—a multi-year path to full operational control of the school system.

I invite all Honourable Members, on both sides of the House, to engage constructively with the legislation on its merits. This reform is bigger than any political party. It is about Bermuda’s children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear with this House and with the public about what this Bill is designed to do, and what it is not. An Education Authority alone does not improve literacy. It does not, on its own, strengthen teaching. It does not, on its own, itself, address student wellbeing. Those improvements come through the daily work of educators, school leaders, families, and communities, through the reform programme already underway, and through the work that will continue for years to come. What an Education Authority does provide is the governance, the accountability, and the continuity needed to sustain the work over the long term. And that is the foundation on which sustained improvement is built.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to speak plainly about the standard [by] which this legislation should be judged. It should be judged on whether it delivers genuine educational governance reform, not merely a change in administrative structures; on whether appointments are genuinely merit-based; on whether accountability is real, measurable, and enshrined in law; on whether consultation is structural and required by the Act; and on whether the framework is durable enough to serve Bermuda’s children across administrations. Those are the right standards. And this Bill is intended to meet them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our teachers, our principals, our aided school leaders, our public officers, our union partners, and the many parents and community members who continue to contribute to and shape the reform work. Whatever we achieve through this reform will rest on their foundation.

But most of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to Bermuda’s students, the young people whose futures depend on the choices this House makes. Mr. Speaker, Governments change. Ministers will change. But every child entering Bermuda’s public schools deserves a system that continues to improve, regardless of who holds those roles. That is what this legislation is about: Creating that stability and safeguarding it for the generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is not about who runs the system. It is about how the system serves the child. I look forward to returning to this Honourable House in September to formally table the Education Authority Bill and to the substantive, evidence-based debate that will follow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister, would you like to present your [Statement] now?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.

AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, affordability is not achieved through a single policy or a single programme. It is achieved through sustained action, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of the people we serve.

I rise today to provide this Honourable House, and the people of Bermuda, with an [update on the Government's Affordable Bermuda Agenda](#), and the progress of the Affordable Bermuda Basket, which concludes its nine-month term on 31 July.

Mr. Speaker, Affordability shapes daily [life] in every Bermuda household. It determines whether families put nutritious meals on the table, whether seniors live [with] dignity on fixed incomes, whether young people establish independent households, and whether local businesses stay competitive while serving our community.

Mr. Speaker, Members will recall that in February [2025], the Ministry [of Home Affairs] was entrusted with an expanded mandate to address cost of living in Bermuda. Affordability was and remains one of the defining challenges facing Bermuda households, and the response that we have taken and heard . . . required it to be grounded in evidence. The Ministry began by listening. We commissioned Island-wide surveys and focus groups, and received responses from all spheres of our community, including small and medium-sized businesses. The public named housing, groceries and health care as their heaviest pressures.

On 25 June [2025], we gathered representatives from across Bermuda in our first-ever Cost of Living Summit. Discussions defined the way forward. In October we published what we heard and what we would do, focused on a deliberate first set of recommendations, careful neither to overcommit or to under-deliver. We also delivered on our pledge to give the public some immediate relief.

Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda was never defined [as] the Government's first and final attempt at addressing costs. Those who were ready to start and join us on the journey did. And we recognise that it was a whole-of-country invitation and that others were likely to join along the way.

Mr. Speaker, we know that reforms must be co-ordinated . . . sorry. They must bring transparency and

they must build competition. And they must be also . . . create a framework that limits market abuse. Legislation must be modernised, and the public interest must always be in the room and at the table.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I will provide an update on each pillar of the Agenda since its launch, and specifically highlight the success of the Affordable Bermuda Basket.

Imports

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, beginning with imports. We recognise that our geographical location exposes Bermuda to world market swings, so imports drive the cost. Resilience in Bermuda means more than strong buildings. It means that we must also ensure that redundant supply routes that increase competition and strengthen supply exist. Under this pillar we have

- hosted Bermuda's first ever [Virtual] Trade Event with the United States Department of Commerce and the US Department of Agriculture, supported by the US Consulate General;
- connected wholesalers and retailers directly to US producers, aggregators and logistics partners;
- engaged with the Florida Economic Commission on citrus importation;
- began reviewing the import rules for milk and citrus to diversify supply [as requested by] local businesses; and
- advanced regional engagement through the public consultation on deeper CARICOM connectivity. Further analysis of those benefits to come before this House.

Food Security and Affordability

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, the cost of food is the number one concern. We were encouraged to help only those who need it most. But the Ministry, and this Government, chose relief for all of Bermuda. Under this pillar we

- Expanded duty relief across hundreds of essential goods in the budget. The expanded list, gazetted as of 8 May 2026, includes rice, fresh fruit and fresh vegetables which now enter at reduced or zero per cent duty.
- Advanced amendments to require price reporting on essentials.
- Launched the Grow, Eat, \$ave parish garden pilot in partnership with the Ministry of Health. Participants learned and developed the skills to grow fresh produce and the model is built to extend parish by parish in the future.
- Secured nine months of savings through partnership with the private sector at the checkout, responding to Bermuda's ask for immediate relief.

Utilities

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, in the utilities pillar, we

- Completed the first comprehensive review of the National Electricity Sector Policy, which was more than a decade old and ensured that the revised Policy ensures that affordability, consumer protection and long-term sustainability was at the centre of Bermuda's energy future.
- Engaged telecommunications providers to offer fixed prices for residents and seniors, which was then confirmed through regulatory review.
- Shielded the public in May from an increase [in fuel prices] through Ministerial Direction which held prices steady for six months while a longer-term framework for economic stability were being developed.
- Partnered with the Bermuda Housing Corporation to develop the Community Solar Pilot [Programme], designed to give participating households more predictable electricity costs.

Housing

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, in the area of housing, between 2016 and 2023, Consumer Affairs recorded an average of 2,230 complaints each year, peaking to 4,300 in 2020, under legislation that was written in 1974 and 1978. Under this pillar we have:

- advanced consultation on the repeal and replacement of the Landlord and Tenant Act [1974] and the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978, consolidating them into a single, modern statute; and
- set out clear rules on deposits, repairs and unlawful lockouts; a Landlord and Tenant Tribunal to ensure that disputes no longer depend on the Magistrates' Court alone, but rather it will be in support of an amplified National Housing Registry.

Consumer Protection and Education

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, under the Consumer Protection and Education pillar, we recognise that affordability is strengthened when consumers are informed. The reconstituted Cost of Living Commission, which took place in May 2025, has assumed an expanded role in monitoring consumer prices, engaging with industry stakeholders and developing recommendations to improve price transparency and strengthen Bermuda's consumer protection framework. Under this pillar we have

- advanced amendments to bring critical services within the Commission's oversight;
- met with Bermuda's banks on banking costs that households carry;

- launched the National Consumer Rights campaigns and Pricing Education [Campaign], with initial focus on food security;
- engaged 210 students through the Dollars & Sense programme this year to inform their efficient management; and
- tested low fee digital payments under the Agenda's Digital Payments Pilot, in May [2025] during the Digital Finance Forum, where transaction fees averaged under two [cent] per [payment].

Mr. Speaker, finally, young Bermudians will also sit inside this work. On 14 July 2026, Bermuda's inaugural Junior Cost of Living Commission held its first meeting. I recognise Mr. Einnajae Caines, who is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. Mr. Caines is completing summer placement in the Ministry Headquarters with responsibility for delivering this flagship initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the Junior Cost of Living Commission gives young Bermudians a direct channel into the affordability conversation, and it ensures that future policy decisions benefit those who will inherit them.

Mr. Speaker, I equally recognise the outstanding young Bermudians who have accepted appointments to serve on the inaugural Junior Cost of Living Commission. They are:

1. Mr. Mathew Moreno, Indiana University
2. Mr. Jayce Fraser, Georgia State University
3. Mr. Tajer Basden, Johnson C. Smith University
4. Miss Kyiah Robinson, University of Essex
5. Miss Nasya Burgess, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
6. Mr. Christen Lugo-[Elibox], Leeds Beckett University
7. [Mr.] Ywione Darrell, Bermuda Monetary Authority
8. Miss Ajai Peets, Office of Youth Affairs
9. Mr. Zayne Sinclair, Youth Entrepreneur.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Junior Cost of Living Commission and discussions . . . Mr. Speaker, the Junior Cost of Living Commission discussed its purpose at its inaugural meeting and what affordability means from a youth perspective. They intend through their work programme to

- examine the cost and the lived experiences and fears of young Bermudians, including groceries, returning home and also transportation pathways, and the cost of entering work or study;
- test public facing Commission outputs, including the grocery price tracker and consumer explainers, from a youth perspective; and
- produce a findings report with practical recommendations to enhance the work of the Commission.

Affordable Bermuda Basket

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, launched on 1 November 2025, was the Affordable Bermuda Basket. This basket was established as a nine-month cost-of-living relief initiative under the Affordable Bermuda Agenda. Its purpose was to reduce the cost of essential grocery items purchased every week by Bermudian families while the Government advanced the broader reforms across imports, food security, utilities, housing and consumer protection.

The design was a genuine partnership between the Government and the private sector, Mr. Speaker. From the outset, local wholesalers reduced the wholesale cost of selected national brand [products] by 10 per cent, and participating retailers applied a further 10 per cent reduction at the point of sale. Mr. Speaker, this was to ensure that full savings would reach the customers on essential items that we know that they buy each week.

Mr. Speaker, what began as a partnership with The MarketPlace and the Lindo's Group then expanded to the inclusion of The Garden Market and The English Market. Bermuda's food wholesalers, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods, and Dunkley's Dairy, also supported the reduction of these costs through the programme.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Basket encompasses 178 essential grocery and household products across four participating retailers. They include the staples that Bermudians purchase every week, including rice, dairy products, baby formula, canned foods, household cleaning products, toiletries and everyday necessities, with brands families recognise. The full product list has been publicly listed throughout the programme on costofliving.gov.bm.

The Ministry has maintained oversight of the savings throughout, with willing retailers reporting monthly data on units sold, total sales value and the discounts applied. As a result, Bermudian households have realised over \$750,000 in cumulative savings over the course of the initiative. That is money which remained in family budgets and reduced financial pressure on households, providing practical and tangible, immediate support that working families required.

Mr. Speaker, as originally announced, the Affordable Bermuda Basket was always intended to be a temporary relief measure, operating from 1 November [2025] through 31 July 2026. It was designed to be a bridge for the period between the consultation to implementation by providing immediate assistance while legislative reforms and policy initiatives progressed. The lessons learned through this initiative will help to shape the next phase of affordability measures and inform future partnerships with industry as we continue implementation of the Affordable Bermuda Agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this House once asked what happens after 31 July. The answer is duty relief on expanded essential goods that took effect in May. The price transparency in public view. The National Electricity Sector Policy where consumer affordability

protections are now included in energy planning. The consolidated Landlord and Tenant Act advances providing permanent reform from work that we began over a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda was founded on data collection, collaboration, real progress and lasting reforms for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the Cost of Living Commission for their support and I extend my appreciation to our retail partners, The MarketPlace, the Lindo's Group, The Garden Market and The English Market, and our wholesale partners, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods and Dunkley's Dairy, who made these savings possible.

Finally, I thank the people of Bermuda for their real stories and engagement that informed our priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda demonstrates what is possible when Government listens, industry collaborates, and communities come together in pursuit of a common goal. The work beyond any single programme must be the fact that it moves Bermuda towards a place where every family can afford to live, work and thrive. That is the unity, equity and tangible progress in practice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

That brings us to . . . those Statements are done. You have a second one.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mm-hmm.

The Speaker: Yes. Would you like to do your second—you sat down that time. You threw me off a little bit.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I just wanted a little relief, but thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right. Members, the Minister has a second Statement.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also report to the Honourable Members and to the public on the [temporary suspension of the Integrated Resource Plan](#), the IRP.

As Honourable Members will be aware, the Electricity (Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution) Order 2026 was tabled recently in this House. The Order was signed and published in the *Official Gazette* on 6 July [2026]. The current IRP proceeding is now formally suspended for a period of up to 18 months.

The Order is made under sections 13A and 45B of the Electricity [Amendment] Act [2026], and

ensures that . . . consultation has taken place with both the TD&R Licensee, which took place earlier this year.

The basis of this pause, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that the suspension is necessary and also to secure consistency between the Government policy and the proposed plan, and that continuing the process would be contrary to the public interest.

One year ago, the Government made its intentions clear, Mr. Speaker. To finalise the reform of a 10-year-old government policy to ensure that the electricity sector would advance with an Integrated Resource Plan [IRP] aligned with it, which embedded consumer affordability protections expressly within the IRP, and to ensure that electricity planning would reflect the economic reality that Bermudians live with and the Government's policies to reduce energy costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan determines Bermuda's future electricity generation mix for the next 15 to 20 years. The decisions arising from this process will have implications on every resident and business on our Island. They will determine how electricity is generated, the pace and scale of renewable energy deployment, future investments in energy infrastructure, and the cost of electricity paid by consumers.

Those decisions must be guided by a current policy, and at present it does not. The Government will not permit further investment in a plan that is not aligned to a soon-completed policy.

For years, the IRP has been in various stages of development—since 2019. IRP cycles in comparable jurisdictions are completed between 12 and 24 months. The 2019 plan set a target of 85 per cent renewable energy generation by 2035. And in 2025, fossil fuel generators supplied 91 per cent of our generation on this Island, and solar supplied under 6 per cent. To date, we do not have an innovative licence, and procurement for offshore wind began only last year. Seven years of this process has not moved toward the generation mix forecasted.

Mr. Speaker, the risk that misalignment carries has a price. And that price is paid by consumers and a country. At the current fuel rate . . . electricity generated in 2025 stands in the order of \$80 million a year, recovered from consumers. Every percentage point of renewable generation that the plan fails to deliver exposes us to greater costs. The average [retail] tariff stands at 53 cents per kilowatt hour, among the highest in the region. Every year of planning not led by a policy and full sector input runs contrary and holds prices in place.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan represents one of the most significant exercises undertaken within Bermuda's electricity sector, with investments of time, technical expertise, and financial resources by the Regulatory Authority, the Department of Energy, Bermuda Electric Light Company [BELCO], technical consultants, and other stakeholders. The costs associated with this work are ultimately borne by the electricity customers. With the Government

signalling a year ago that it would advance the process, we must ensure that the consumer and the public are kept in contemplation.

Mr. Speaker, the current National Electricity Sector Policy was issued in 2015 and is now more than 11 years old. Advances in renewable energy generation, the technology, battery storage, distributed energy resources, electric vehicles, digital technologies, and international best practice have transformed how jurisdictions around the world are winning with a better approach towards electricity planning.

The Ministry has undertaken a comprehensive review of the National Electricity Sector Policy, and built collaboration into the work from the start. Mr. Speaker, Members will recall that the Ministry convened the Energy Policy Steering Committee to bring voices from across the electricity sector into the drafting of this new policy. The Department evaluated each of those inputs on its merit. The Ministry then published a draft policy for public consultation on the Citizens' Forum in April, and in May of this year held several town halls.

Mr. Speaker, we received submissions from independent regulators to students and two demands converged: Affordability and fairness must be incorporated.

The revised policy will establish firmly the Government's vision and objectives for Bermuda's electricity sector and provide the framework necessary to guide future generation and planning and also investment decisions.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will have noted the announcement recently that restructured [electricity] rates will take effect from 1 August [2026], as approved by the Regulatory Authority. Cost-reflective charging is the correct principle, and it has been a policy that the Government has stood behind and shared [on] 27 May 2025, when the Ministerial Direction was expressly contemplated, differential tariff classes for consumers, fully, partially, and minimally reliant on the grid.

Fourteen months separate that direction from this change. However, the cost-of-service analysis underpinning the change indicates that residential customers have carried a disproportionate share of the system's costs for years. And this adjustment arrives in the middle of long-term system planning. Expert advice confirms that this very adjustment should rest in alignment with the policy and an IRP process. Rate changes divorced from systems planning are precisely what the public asked this Government to end. Pricing must follow planning, and planning must follow policy. The suspension is no longer important. It is, therefore, critical.

Mr. Speaker, the . . . additionally at present, the Integrated Resource Plan is authored by the utility. Ten years have tested that design, with the last two proposed plans submitted recommending generations inconsistent with the Government's policy.

The duty to lead with the public interest in mind rests with public institutions. The Government, which

sets national policy, the Regulatory Authority, which regulates the sector within it and the utility and sector providers informs such a plan.

Mr. Speaker, the collaborative architecture that our policy was built on will form part of the Integrated Resource Plan when it resumes. A forum of sector voices, structured public consultations, and [published] reasoning behind an inside resource planning, and good investment and the reconstitution provisions of an Order make room for exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, the future of this sector belongs to Bermudians, many of whom are in classrooms today. This summer the Department of Energy welcomed two bursary recipients as summer students. The Department gave them the consultation draft and asked them for their honest assessment. Their feedback on affordability, on training pathways, and on planning for the whole of Bermuda . . . they want equitable access to renewable energy, with community solar carrying [the] benefits of the transition beyond property owners, technology and digital infrastructure. They also shared that they want clearer communication of policy to young Bermudians through secondary schools, Bermuda College and regular, transparent public reporting on implementation. Every one of those topics is being integrated into the final document because we believe it has merit, alongside the formal submissions that the Ministry previously received. We are acting with the very collaboration that we also wish to see.

Upon the completion of the publication of the revised National Electricity Sector Policy, Mr. Speaker, which is anticipated in the coming weeks, the Government will engage with the Regulatory Authority and stakeholders on the reconstituted process, and the Authority will issue its notice of resumption.

Mr. Speaker, alignment between national policy and long-term resource planning is critical. It protects the country, electricity customers, and the generations who will inherit these decisions. The decisions made through an IRP will shape what every household on this Island pays for power for decades. And the plan must ensure that is measured against one test: That it delivers for all of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements for this morning.

We will now move on with the next item on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: We have two such reports this morning.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister . . . yes.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: [Good] Morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry . . . MP Scott, would you like to present your report?

REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SEPTEMBER 2023 CYBER-ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I hereby present the [Report](#) of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the September 2023 Cyber-Attack on the Government of Bermuda, which is respectfully submitted for the information of this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You can do yours, yes.

REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE: COMPLIANCE WITH PROCUREMENT RULES, FINANCIAL INSTRUCTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF COVID-19 TRAVEL AUTHORISATION, PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Under the provisions of Standing Order 34(3) of the House of Assembly, I hereby submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, a [report](#) of the Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee [PAC] on Compliance with Procurement Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel Authorisation, Procurement and Operation.

The PAC requests that this report be forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for consideration and response on the recommendations made by the Committee. And if I might add, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Committee and the Parliamentary staff for their fine support and administration.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Okay, we appreciate it. That brings us to a close of Reports.
We will now move on.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: However, before I actually call on the first question to be done this morning, the Junior Minister has approached me this morning to indicate that the questions he sought to find answers for last week . . . he has the answers today for the respective Members.
And have you provided the answers?

An Hon. Member: I am doing so right now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Those Members who sought to ask questions should be receiving them now.

With that said, we will move on this morning. For the listening audience, we have written questions that were submitted, and we also have questions from this morning's Statements.

We will start with the written questions. And the first written question this morning is to the Minister of Education from the Opposition Leader. The responses were required in writing. Have those responses been received?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House, for each graduating class of Government senior schools from 2018 through June 2026, the number and percentage of graduates who met the academic entrance requirements to apply directly to an accredited overseas university?*

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide for this Honourable House the performance indicators currently used by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the post-secondary outcomes of graduates from Government senior schools?*

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide for this Honourable House the annual results for each performance indicator identified in question 2 for each year from 2018 through 2026?*

The Speaker: The next question is to the Minister of Works from the Opposition Whip. And the two questions both require an oral response.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your first question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Apologies, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

QUESTION 1: ASPHALT PATCHING MACHINE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how long has the asphalt patching machine been on the Island?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment's road paving fleet does not include an asphalt patching machine. Accordingly, there is no asphalt patching machine to which the Honourable Member's question refers.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Supplementary. Maybe I need to clarify.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no. This is my second question.

The Speaker: He can have a supplementary. You can offer a supplementary.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We have got a lot of speakers in the House today. Got a lot of speakers in the House today.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He can—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I have a supplementary question.

The Speaker: The Member can ask his supplementary.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Ask your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Maybe I don't have the exact correct name of the machine.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, my question—

The Speaker: Members, Members, I can't hear. The noise is too loud.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Please let the Member ask his question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My question is, there was a purposeful . . . we understood there to be a purposeful machine that carries asphalt hot while they are moving on the road, as opposed to asphalt being put in a truck and trucked around the Island and then dipped from the truck into the potholes.

I understand that there was a machine that was brought in that kept the bitumen hot and the asphalt hot as it moved along so that it adhered to the road.

Has that type of machine been brought into the Island?

The Speaker: So, you are asking if the new-described machine that has hot asphalt . . . is that operational?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And what is it called?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, with that clarification I can take that to get that information, but the question before me was referring to an asphalt patching machine and my answer remains.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay.
Second supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, second.

Certainly . . . certainly the Minister, as the Minister of Public Works, would be aware of this machine by now. So, I find it difficult that he would not be able to answer that question.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It is a supplemental question—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —to the substantive question, and I am sure that he already knows the answer.

An Hon. Member: Quite right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, knowing the answer, can he give that answer?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the question that was before me that I came prepared to answer was in reference to an asphalt patching machine. We do not have an asphalt patching machine. The Member has now clarified what he is referring to, and I will endeavour to get him that answer in due course.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary.

The Speaker: You want to ask a supplementary?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary.

The Speaker: supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, supplementary.

Minister, in your opinion shouldn't the former Minister of Works know which machine he is referring to?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive and Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member is imputing improper motive and—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —in addition to that misleading the House.

We never brought in such a machine so there was no reason for us to know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, it's a bit redundant and, quite frankly, unnecessary.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We didn't have the problems that they are having—

An Hon. Member: Oh really?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with the roads. That's right. That's right.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay, all right. The Minister passes.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: ASPHALT PATCHING MACHINE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Based on the Minister's answer, it pretty much makes it redundant to ask number two.

It says, Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House why we are not using the asphalt patching machine islandwide—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I will certainly change that question if you would like, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: No! You can't change the question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The character of it—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Do your homework.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What are we doing?

The Speaker: It has been . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Well, well . . . let me help you out. It has been clarified that you used the wrong description of the machine that you are trying to question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We don't know the name.

The Speaker: So, the question that responds to this question would be similar to the last question.

But what you can endeavour [to do] is to ask the [Minister] can he provide information on the new machine that relates to that question.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: We will gladly give it to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, sure. Yes, I spoke to the Minister before. I didn't want this to be controversial.

We are just trying to understand what is going on—

An Hon. Member: With the public.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with the public. So, if the Minister wants to prolong things, like we typically do in this House,—

The Speaker: Well, well . . . no, not prolonging, not prolonging—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —then I will take the answer the next time around.

The Speaker: No, no, no, no—

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: Come on.

The Speaker: It's not prolonging. The Minister wants to make sure he gets the correct information.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He already knows.

The Speaker: He wants to get the correct information.

So, you are asking that he provides the information on both questions regarding to the new machinery.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It would be much appreciated if the Minister could do that.

The Speaker: Thank you. And I am sure the Minister will endeavour to get it for you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next question that had a written question is for the Minister of Home Affairs from MP Robinson. And it was an oral question, but I don't see MP Robinson at the moment. So, we will move on because I am not sure if anyone can [ask] the question for him.

The next question is to the Minister for Cabinet Office and was also from [Shadow] Minister Robinson and I don't see [Shadow] Minister Robinson at this moment. So, we will pass on both of those.

That now takes us to questions that were generated from the Statements this morning.

And the first Statement this morning that has a question [was by] the Premier on his visit to the Azores.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: It's A-sores.

The Speaker: Premier . . . Premier, MP DeCouto has a question for you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Speak in English, please.

QUESTION 1: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, I am sure myself and many, many people in Bermuda were so glad to hear of this trip and the Premier building these relationships. And to hear that 20 per cent of [Bermudian] people [are] of Portuguese heritage . . . frankly, that sounds low to me, but it is still a lot.

And the Premier mentioned many cultural, technical and scientific issues in his Statement. He must be aware that there are many Bermudians of Portuguese and other heritage actively creating economic links between these countries. And I wonder if the Premier could comment on what efforts Government is making, or initiatives they have, to support people who are trying to forge these economic links.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am trying to relate that to the actual parameters of the Statement. The question is, Is Government helping to assist economic links between Bermuda and the Azores from the discussions . . . from the topic of your Statement? Did I get it right? Economic links? Economic links.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your attempt to clarify. I am not clear on what the Honourable Member is asking.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: May I clarify, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Okay, you can clarify.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know the Premier had many discussions. In those discussions, did they discuss creating, strengthening or supporting economic links whether private or between the governments?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: That was addressed in my Statement, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Statement did mention cultural issues, technical issues, educational issues. I did not see any mention of any commercial initiatives. Would the Premier clarify what commercial initiatives or economic initiatives were discussed, since he said that it was in the Statement?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those matters are spelled out in the Statement in regard to matters related to food production, in relation to matters that are also related to ocean protection and other matters that are advancing on those when we are talking about the

Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Initiative and other things which seek to generate investment inside and to work and collaborate on those particular matters. There are also matters related, as I said, to dairy and matters related to food, and also matters related to air transport.

So, I think all those things are covered insofar as economic.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier identify the quantum of investment that was discussed in the food production and provide some overview of the sorts of individuals or organisations that wanted to invest in these food production initiatives?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those matters are addressed in the Statement with the name and the actual companies of who we are doing food production with.

The Speaker: Thank you.

New question? Second question?

QUESTION 2: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier spoke at length about how the story of Portuguese Bermudians is intertwined in Bermuda's history. Can the Premier comment on why that important story was not included in the Government's White *[sic]* Paper, *The Story of Us*, or its associated propaganda materials?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda?

Another Hon. Member: What?

The Speaker: Premier.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I didn't hear the question.

An Hon. Member: He should repeat that.

The Speaker: I was conversing with your Whip. Could you just repeat it?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talked at length about how important the story of Portuguese Bermudians is and how it's been intertwined with Bermuda's history. The question was why is that story not included in the Government's Green Paper, *The Story of Us*, and its associated propaganda materials?

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda materials.

Another Hon. Member: Propaganda?

Another Hon. Member: Foolishness.

The Speaker: I am trying to correlate that to the actual Statement.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is out of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member must withdraw the statement and ask it properly.

The Speaker: I am trying to find the leverage, and I am having difficulty finding the leverage correlating the two.

One was specifically speaking about the trip and the other speaks to a different matter. The highlights of the trip [in] the Statement were in reference to what was accomplished, what was discussed in the trip. Okay?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, point of order, Mr. Speaker. It cannot be right—

The Speaker: No, no—

Hon. E. David Burt: —that this Honourable Member will be able to use words like that when at every single point in time those Members will stand up and say improper motive, Mr. Speaker.

It is improper to accuse the Government on that, Mr. Speaker, and the question must be ruled out of order. I ask for ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am trying to address that the question is inappropriate for the topic that it is on.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: May I quote from the Statement, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I am trying . . . now, now . . . and for clarity, there was a series of conversations that were taking place trying to clear up something, so I missed the full of the conversation.

If there were words in there that were inappropriate . . . if there were words inappropriate, then we need to address the inappropriate words.

What I was trying to do was address just your question. But if you can put or restate your question without using what would seem to be inappropriate words. Restate your question.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, I used the word "propaganda." And let me use . . . may I quote the definition of propaganda? *A form of communication that is primarily used to influence an audience and persuade them to further an agenda. Propaganda may not be objective and often selectively presents facts to encourage a particular perception or uses loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to information presented.*

I can say "in my view," Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: If you wish, I will clarify and say, "in my view" the associated propaganda materials that come with the Green Paper.

The Speaker: I was trying to get you to a point where you could get an answer for your question. I am trying to help you to get to the answer, because I think you do want an answer to your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh yes.

The Speaker: If you want an answer to your question, let's put the question as . . . without the propaganda piece in there.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Of course, Mr. Speaker.

Just to give the context for the question, may I re-quote a sentence from the Statement?

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: "[T]he ties between Bermuda and the Azores are ties of family . . . generations of Azoreans have crossed the Atlantic to build lives in Bermuda, and today roughly 20 per cent of Bermudians carry that heritage . . .".

So, my question is, why is this important part of Bermuda's culture not included in the Government's *The Story of Us*, along with other important stories?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, *The Story of Us* is speaking about our connections to the Caribbean. We are clearly . . . and defined on a collective basis, including this Government, having a public holiday, inviting

multiple Ministers, continuing to press forward things and all the rest.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Let it be remembered, Mr. Speaker, that it was the Progressive Labour Party that fixed the issues that were left by the United Bermuda Party, of which they know that they claim their heritage from, where they discriminated against Portuguese-born persons. We fixed that, Mr. Speaker.

We also, Mr. Speaker, fixed the issue of mixed status families. That is the record of this Government. And the Portuguese people in this country know who stands up for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Any further supplementary or new question?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier, MP King also has a question for you.

QUESTION 1: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Members of this Honourable House and the listening public.

Honourable Premier, in your Statement you highlighted discussions with the Azorean Regional Director of Agriculture regarding dairy production and indicated that Bermuda may benefit from Azorean expertise. Can you tell this Honourable House what specific commitments, projects or agreements were reached to strengthen Bermuda's dairy industry and improve our food security?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement. Further details will come after the technical officers, as stated in the Statement, conclude those discussions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Can the Honourable Premier confirm whether the Government intends to review Bermuda's

current dairy policies, including the regulatory framework governing dairy production and milk imports to determine whether they continue to serve Bermuda's long-term food security interests?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, that is not related to my Statement, and so—

The Speaker: You saw me pause, and I was trying to understand the wording to see if it fits inside the Statement.

The Statement itself wasn't addressing the long-term of the food . . . shortage supply, whichever term you used. It was just speaking to what could possibly be discussed with this new partnership. So, it didn't necessarily speak to the overall view of what the shortage is.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the ongoing concerns surrounding Bermuda's dairy operation, including environmental and public concerns raised by nearby residents, what lessons from the Azorean model of modern dairy farming, environmental protection, and animal husbandry does the Government intend to adopt in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those will be matters of discussion. That is precisely what was stated inside of the Statement.

We spoke about the matter related to the University of the Azores. I made clear the challenges of which we are facing and the need to make sure that we increase and boost domestic dairy production, while also making sure that we can do it better. We recognise that there have been challenges, and there is expertise there. That is what partnership is about.

So, whether or not it was with the University of the Azores, or whether or not with the conversation with the Regional Director responsible for Agriculture on these particular matters, the Assistant Cabinet Secretary and the Deputy Director have already followed up on these particular matters. As we have noted, they are important. We have put money inside of our budget in place for strategic initiatives in regard to food security, and those things will happen.

So, I understand the Honourable Member may have a particular viewpoint on this. Got it. Accept it. But the reality is this Government is going to continue to press forward on matters related to food security, and we have identified a partner that can certainly help and to assist us.

On the Saturday that I left for the Azores, at my community clinic there were persons there who were from the Netherlands who were here on Island looking to help us with our dairy issues as well. So, we are continuing to move on this. But these are partnerships that can be formed.

So, the Honourable Member can stay tuned for these particular matters, because that is what we are looking at. It is not limited to what specifically, it is limited to all of what we can do because we may not even know what to ask for.

They produce significant amounts of dairy. They export dairy. They export cheese. They export a number of different things. They do other things insofar as the Honourable Member had mentioned in animals. We are not trying to go that far. What we said is we are going to start small. We know [precisely what it is that we want], and we want to make sure that we have a stable dairy supply that is up to the latest standards, that is infused with the latest technology so we can continue to have that in Bermuda. And that is what the partnership is going to entail.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second question?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: And I thank the Honourable Premier for his answers.

Would I be correct in saying that the purpose of the consultations or meetings with the Agriculture Ministry and respective persons was more informal to start a preliminary process of discussion towards establishing collaboration and cooperation between our two countries?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: No.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When should the people of Bermuda expect that some of the discussed topics of importance will be implemented according to a specific plan, as these were not informal discussions?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement.

The Speaker: The answer is contained within the Statement.

Second supplementary . . . or third question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Will the Premier table any memorandum of understanding, work plan, or technical cooperation agreement arising from his visit so that this House can assess whether the visit delivers tangible benefits rather than remaining an expression of goodwill?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if there are further things to be tabled and shared with this House, they will be shared.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Third question. That was your second supplementary on the second question. Third question?

Mr. Robert King: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 3: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: What was the total cost of the official delegation to Bermuda's taxpayers, and what key performance indicators will the Government use to measure whether this visit provides value for money?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the travel will be declared in the regular fashion as is normally done.
Thank you.

The Speaker: The policy is, just to repeat it for the listening audience, that all government travel is published on the website, so it is clearly available for all to see the cost of any trip.

A supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Can the Premier advise which government departments have been tasked with implementing the commitments arising from this visit and when the House can expect a progress report?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure that's a similar question that I already answered the last time I answered. But I will let the Honourable Member know that those matters are residing from the London office and the Assistant Cabinet Secretary are

accompanied and those matters will be dealt with in due course.

The Speaker: You have one supplementary.

No more? Thank you.

Premier, that brings a close to the questions on your first Statement.

Premier, the second Statement also has questions and it's again from MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your first question?

QUESTION 1: PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable Premier, your Statement repeatedly refers to *Building a Fairer Bermuda*. Can the Premier identify the objective measures the Government uses to conclude Bermuda is fairer today than it was in 2017, particularly given continued concerns over the cost of living, housing affordability, health care costs and homelessness?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let me start at the end and work to the beginning.

Tangible measures on matters related to housing, record investments in affordable housing, significant additional units delivered, mortgage guarantee programme for first-time Bermudian homeowners going inside of houses.

If we want to talk about health care, let's discuss health care again. Expansion of FutureCare, expansion of HIP, making sure additional benefits that are being given to persons underneath—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear it. I've got it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair.

Hon. E. David Burt: But, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: The listening audience—

Hon. E. David Burt: I got you, Mr. Speaker, but I need to be able to make sure I concentrate because if they ask the question, I am sure that they want the answer.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, when we are talking about health care provision, Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that it was that party that cut health care provision. It was that party that tried to strip mammograms from women. It was that party that attempted that. Whereas this party

has implemented significant additional investment inside of health care in addition to expanding . . . while particular matters, and, Mr. Speaker, and,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —and, they are still going.

And, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: I hear you clearly.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and, Mr. Speaker, making sure that persons are able to access preventative care without a copay. Let's go back to . . . I am trying to remember the other matters which you said.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There were so many.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am trying to remember, Mr. Speaker. I actually do not remember because I went, I went backwards to forwards.

The Speaker: Measurable benchmarks.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, but there's . . . but there's plenty. I mean, the Honourable Member had asked about matters related to fairness when it comes to the economy.

When it comes to taxes, that party had payroll taxes at the highest level in history for workers in this country. And we have managed to reduce them while making sure that wealthy persons pay more, and they did not support us increasing tax on wealthy people to cut taxes for workers, Mr. Speaker. There is a difference. That is objective fairness.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a, a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Will the Premier acknowledge that many working Bermudians continue to struggle despite payroll tax reductions because increases in the cost of food, electricity, insurance, health care and housing have outpaced those savings? So, despite the monies that have been invested into the community, will the Premier, the Honourable Premier, accept that things have materially gotten worse for the community?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. And I will read my Statement again, to quote, in case the Honourable Member did not hear. "Mr. Speaker, we do not say that every challenge has been solved. But after nine years, the record is clear. This Government has guided Bermuda through a once-in-a-century pandemic, restored stability to the public finances, and made deliberate choices to build a Bermuda that is fairer, stronger, and better prepared for the future."

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplementary or a second question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Would the Honourable Premier accept the findings of the Cambridge Report regarding educational standing? And would he also accept the report from HOME (the charity) regarding homelessness? The Premier is suggesting that things are better because of Government's investment in the community, a fairer Bermuda.

The point is, what metrics is the Premier using? Despite the announcement that things are getting better . . . what actual evidence supports the statements that the Honourable Premier is making that things in this country have improved, according to his Ministerial Statement?

The Speaker: Okay, now, you started by referencing the Cambridge Report. Cambridge . . . I am trying to get your word. What I was going to bring to your attention, there was actually a Statement that was given by the Minister of Education referencing Cambridge.

Maybe your question would be better suited to that Minister. But then you started to rephrase your question. So, I did get uncertainty on if you wanted to—

Mr. Robert King: I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —rephrase your question to the Premier. You can rephrase a different question. If you want to do Cambridge—

Mr. Robert King: I will speak to the Cambridge one next.

The Speaker: —that is to the Minister of Education.
Thank you.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay?

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But regarding the question concerning where is the evidence to support that the community is better off because of the investment that the Government has made, what specific measures show, apart from increased expenditures in services, that the persons in this community, their lifestyle and circumstances have improved?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let us pretend you are a senior citizen, and your prescription drug costs are . . . well, you are.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, you are, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you very much.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: But let us pretend your prescription drug bill was \$2,500 a year. And you didn't have . . . and you had to come out of pocket. Let's pretend it was \$4,000 a year, and the limit was \$2,000. You would have had to come \$2,000 out of your pocket or find a family member. Now it is covered, Mr. Speaker.

Let us pretend that you are that Bermudian, that young Bermudian who was looking to buy a home and could not save 20 per cent for a down payment.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah! Come on!

Hon. E. David Burt: But this Government reduced it to 10 [per cent], and it had a lower interest rate. So, Bermudians can get on the housing ladder.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Come on!

Hon. E. David Burt: There are multiple examples, Mr. Speaker. Not everything is perfect. But it is so interesting that that side, Mr. Speaker, cannot even acknowledge *any* progress that has been made in this country.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Do you have a second question? You used your two supplementaries on the first question.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, a second question.

QUESTION 2: PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Mr. Robert King: The Premier, the Honourable Premier, will have us pretend. And as long as we operate in the alternative reality of pretending, we can accept that the statements are true.

However, where is the evidence that health care costs, because of Government's contributions, are

less for persons when we have monopolies that are basically dictating how much people are going to pay? Where is the evidence that shows that the cost of living is less for persons, and fairer according to the current practices?

The Speaker: Mr. King, MP King, try and make your questions a bit more precise so we don't have to try and analyse the point that you are trying to raise.

That was a long question that went in a few directions. I am going to put two questions to the floor right now.

One, Premier, would you like to answer this now? Or do you want to come back, because it is going on 12:30?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer and hopefully the Honourable Member will then yield to allow his other Members to ask questions, as there are 11 statements and we are only on Statement number two.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that the evidence, I have repeated it, it is inside of the Statement. The Honourable Member does not want to accept that there has been progress on a number of fashions and a number of issues. That's his opinion. He can continue to do that. I am going to speak to the progress of which his Government has made.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move this Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:00 pm for lunch.

The Speaker: Are there any objections that we adjourn until 2:00 pm?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Speaker: There are none. Thank you—

[Crosstalk]

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House now stands adjourned.
Thank you.

Proceedings suspended at 12:34 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

The Speaker: Members, welcome back from lunch. The House is now back in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: When we broke for lunch, we were still in the midst of questions from this morning. There are 30 minutes and 34 seconds left on the clock for questions. We were on . . . we completed what we did in written questions, so far. We may have an opportunity to go back to what was missed if we have time on the clock.

As for the Statements, Members, we were on Statement number two, and MP King was on his feet. I believe he has finished his questions for that.

So, Premier, that will bring to a close the questions for your Statements. We will now move on in our attempt to start the clock without losing where we were. And the first Statement that has questions (so we can start on this afternoon) is the Statement [by] the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors. We'll come back to that one.

And the next question is for a Statement [by] the Minister who stuck his head up just now and smiled at me, Minister of Tourism [and Transport, Culture and Sport].

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister of Tourism, you have questions from the Opposition Whip, along with a couple of other Members. So, I'm going to start the clock now.

Opposition Whip.

[Crosstalk]

QUESTION PERIOD

[Continuation thereof]

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA'S RIDESHARING PROGRAMME, PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon, colleagues, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was really good to hear the numbers that the Minister gave as to how well and successful ridesharing is so far, and this is good news.

I was just curious, a quick question. Since the number of weeks, five weeks, six weeks, or whatever it has been since this has been implemented, have we received any complaints concerning ridesharing thus far?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member from the other side for that question.

And I will say that there has been a vast amount of feedback that has come from rideshare operators, and there have been no complaints that have been received by the Public Service Vehicle Licensing Board regarding public service vehicles operated by rideshare operators. So, the answer to that question is no.

However, I could say, it's not a complaint, but it's interesting, that some of the feedback from rideshare operators is that they want to do more. And they say: *Well, we would like to do more. We see people on Front Street who are waiting for a taxi, and we just want to pick them up.* And I said: *Absolutely not.* And it's, you know, very admirable to know that they see that there is a need, but they also know the regulations that we have in place, and they are adhering to them.

So, while we see that we will get more rideshare operators on the platforms, I'm happy to report that there have been no formal complaints that have come from passengers or the public when it comes to rideshare. Thank you for the question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

QUESTION 1: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

Honourable Minister, firstly, thank you for your immediate communication with me since you were re-appointed as the Minister and for reaching out to open up the communication with the Opposition.

My question is: Considering you have laid out how important this Education Authority is going to be, would you table the information that led to making the decision to implement the Education Authority so that we can have that information, the public can see how this decision was made prior to the debate that will happen in September?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there certainly will be opportunities to discuss that information in the presentation, the presentation that I've invited, that I said that I would have with the Opposition. And so we'll be able to go through that information at that particular point.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Ben Smith: No, Mr. Speaker, second question.

The Speaker: Second question. Okay.

QUESTION 2: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Also, considering how importantly the Education Authority is painted in the Statement that you put out this morning, and I thank you for being comprehensive on the transparency version of what needs to happen in order for us to get to this. Can the [Minister] give us any indication on the pause period of 24 months that happened when the Education Authority seemed to have been shelved, considering how important you are saying that it is now?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't say "shelved" is correct. Drafting instructions were sent to Chambers while I was still the Minister there, and drafts have been completed since then.

What we've done is, one of the things that we have heard is the . . . originally, when the drafting instructions were issued, the promise was to come back, once we had gotten the legal advice with the persons who had been consulted to get to that point, to say this is where we find ourselves. And I'm just reengaging those conversations now.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Honourable Minister, were there any changes that were proposed during that 24-month period to what you had left when you were the Minister?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I can say that when we do bring this Bill in September, it will adhere to the drafting instructions that were approved by Cabinet.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Ben Smith: So, is the Minister saying that no changes have been proposed during that period where he was not the Minister?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is how Bills are developed. Permission is sought from Cabinet for drafting instructions, and those are based on what was presented. And if there are significant changes to whatever that Bill is going to be from what was approved in Cabinet, it would have to come back to Cabinet to seek that approval. We are looking forward to moving forward with what was originally approved in Cabinet, and that will be the Bill that will come here in September.

The Speaker: New question? Those were your two supplementaries. Would you like a third question?

QUESTION 3: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister let us know whether . . . I know he's only been back in that chair for a short amount of time. Has he had an opportunity to meet with the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education to go through what is going to be expected from the Education Authority?

I know he hasn't had a lot of time to be there, but has he had the opportunity to meet with them to discuss any changes that they might have seen in the period that he was not the Minister?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with technical staff. As I stated when I was first appointed, the priorities are making sure schools are ready in September and the Education Authority. We've made headway in both of those, so I have sat down with technical officers and discussed it.

And as I did speak to in my Statement, I've reached out and spoken with all of the aided schools and the particular unions, as well as reengaging with other persons who were involved in the process prior to my departure, Mr. Speaker. So that is where we find ourselves, and there will be more consultation that takes place as we move towards September for sure.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That would be supplementary on your third question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Minister be able to tell us whether, in his contact with the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education, there was any feedback that gave him ideas of changes that maybe they wanted to have implemented in this, considering that there was

24 months between the last time that he laid it for drafting?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, I was trying to calculate my . . . because you said 24 months, whether it was 24 months.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take any suggestions on board and move forward from that. It's really too early to say if there might be anything significantly different from what was originally approved. But we are where we are. And we do intend to surely have those types of conversations as we move forward. But as it stands now, we are moving forward with what was originally understood that the Bill would be, based on the instructions that were issued.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary, or are you done?

Hon. Ben Smith: That's it.

The Speaker: That's it. Okay.

Minister, we'll move on.

Minister of Home Affairs, you have questions as well, questions on your first Statement.

MP Robinson, would you like to put your questions?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: That's for the first Statement.

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought . . . I saw the top of your head. I was thinking the Minister. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Okay. All right.

With that said, then, your written questions were to . . . your . . . your . . . the same Minister. The Minister's not here.

Let me remind Members, the business starts at two o'clock, and if you're on the Order Paper for stuff, I expect you to be here at two o'clock. Not just me, but the public. And we have time left on the Question Period. We have Members who still have questions to be answered, and unfortunately, the Minister is not here. And it does a disservice when we are going through the business of the day.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, if I could just make a comment. In addition to that, I noticed that some of the Statements were like 11 pages. I know that that is traditionally not done in the House of Parliament.

I don't know if you were going to speak to it or not, but those are unnecessarily long. Some were 9 pages, 11 pages.

You'd like to . . . Okay.

The Speaker: Yes. My office has been notified to remind Members . . . Ministers, that there is a length of . . . you try to respect when Statements are given. Okay?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. There is one Minister in the Chamber with which I had written questions for oral response, if she's willing.

The Speaker: Oh.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes, the Minister of Cabinet is here. Yes, okay. Yes.

Minister of Cabinet, yes, you're present. So, Minister of Cabinet, MP Robinson has an oral question for you, which requires an oral response. Minister, would you put your question . . . Member, would you put your question, please?

QUESTION 1: ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, and thank you to the Minister for her indulgence, and yours as well, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the progress of the Electoral Reform Working Group?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as the newly appointed Minister of the Cabinet Office, I'm pleased to provide this Honourable House with an update on the progress of the Electoral Reform Working Group. The Working Group is currently reviewing the comprehensive Electoral Reform Framework, systematically addressing all four pillars of the mandate.

I remind the House that the four pillars are as follows:

- voter access and registration;
- election day processes and administration;
- campaign and election finance;
- governance and oversight.

I'm pleased to report that the group has reached the third pillar, which is campaign and election finance, entirely on schedule. To maintain this momentum, the Working Group meets twice weekly, on Wednesdays from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm and on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. To date, the group has held five sessions, including an informative engagement with a subject matter expert. And the meetings have been characterised as consistently lively and

thought-provoking. The effectiveness of this process has been driven by the group's composition, which represents a broad cross-section of our community. By pairing electoral and administrative expertise with community representatives, we are ensuring that a diverse range of perspectives and lived experiences directly inform this work.

While one member has resigned due to time constraints, the remaining members continue to be fully engaged and active. To ensure administrative continuity between sessions, the group is supported by a dedicated support officer. Following the recent change in ministerial responsibility, I have already met with the members to personally assure them of my continued commitment to this process and the importance of its continuity.

As this is an advisory body, the formal recommendations of the Working Group will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Supplementary question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Just for clarity, as I know, her predecessor's deadline was September for this to be completed, I just wanted to get that pledge from the Minister that that timeline is still in play and that we will have the electoral reform table in September.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Yes, it is, sir. And we are excited that the group is on task and on schedule, as I've just shared.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

[Pause]

The Speaker: I note that Minister Lightbourne has now joined us.

Minister, two o'clock is two o'clock when you've got matters on the table, okay?

There are questions for you in reference to your Statement, and written questions from the Member as well. We'll go to . . . which would you like to do first? Member, would you like to . . . your written question to or the Statement?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Statement, okay.

Minister, MP Robinson would like to put questions to you regarding your Statements.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is for the Affordable Agenda—

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —Statement. Yes. Correct. Okay.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I noticed that the appreciation was extended to retail partners. I just wanted to ask the Minister: Have they shown support for the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026 that was mentioned in the Ministerial Statement?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member, and also you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence, both for the questions that he originally had written, as [I] wasn't in the House for this morning, and this afternoon for me being a little late.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Statement itself spoke to greater oversight over the Regulations. It didn't actually speak to what will be debated this afternoon. So, I will thank the Honourable Member for his questions during the debate.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second question. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: [I] just wanted to ask if the Cost of Living Commission has discovered any evidence of potential price gouging in Bermuda, as it was mentioned in the Statement.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Hot off the press, we actually just left the Cost of Living Commission meeting and I think that there are reservations that the Commission, on some findings, will speak to once the minutes . . . and those are finalised. I don't want to pre-empt those, but I do think that there is insightful information on the trickles of information that we have been able to receive. And what is intended is to be able to have a more accurate representation of the market and the cost of goods in support of affordability for the public.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further questions or supplementals? None? Okay.

Would you like to move on to the second Statement then . . . Oh, MP DeCouto.

Minister, MP DeCouto would like to put questions to you.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Minister's Statement stated that they have led the repeal and placement of the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Rent Increases [(Domestic Control)] Control Act. I hope that the Minister could educate me as to when exactly that happened because my understanding [is that] those Bills have not come to the House, and I don't see them on the Order Paper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The revised Statement, actually, that was communicated . . . so, I don't know if you received a Statement that was not yet finalised, but the revised Statement had amended it to include consultation. And that's actually what was read. I'm sure that Hansard would also reflect the same.

And so, it speaks to the consultation, which was in the public domain, and the same Schedule and table of the consolidated feedback was also reflected.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, I can only go with the written materials after the fact.

The Speaker: Well, put your question. Put your question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. The Statement refers to the Bermuda Housing Corporation's (BHC) Community Solar Programme and the advantages of that. And, also, I know from some other Statements from the Minister that she seems to be in support of the extra \$100 charge for people with solar panels by BELCO.

Can the Minister comment on how that charge will impact the usefulness of the BHC's Community Solar [Pilot] Programme in reducing the people's bills?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'm sorry. I don't know that I [am] clear on the Member's question, Mr. Speaker. Could you perhaps ask him to restate just the question?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes. Just clarify your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, given that the Statement refers to the benefits of the BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme, do those benefits still remain with the recent changes, including the \$100 charge per month for people with solar panels?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I invite your feedback, but the question that the Honourable Member has raised actually relates to two separate Statements that were [given] this morning. One is relating to electricity pertaining specifically to the IRP order, and the second speaks to the Affordable Bermuda Agenda and its initiatives. So, I will seek your ruling on if they ought to be separate or they are eligible to be connected in this way.

The Speaker: Member, if you can address this one to the first Statement, it's the one we're still on right now, and then you can address the second part to the second Statement.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, the question regarding the \$100, Mr. Speaker, that's a matter of public record, so it's not actually relating to any particular Statement. That's based on information that's well known to the general public and this House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, but we're trying to break it down so she can give a response from this particular Statement.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, yes, this is to the Statement on the update on the Affordable Bermuda Agenda.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Given that that Statement calls out the benefits of the BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme that have been achieved, and given the changes—the publicly available information about the changes and the rate charges for people with solar panels—do those benefits still remain through that BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. So, you're basically asking if the benefit on affordable living that was given to persons with the solar panel is being effective under her Statement on affordable living, affordable Bermuda. Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: It would only be appropriate to give the accurate response, which is around the electricity Statement that I [gave] earlier, and I would invite the Honourable Member to give that question during that particular question, a Statement, rather, being

reviewed, and I can give the appropriate response that would inform a better answer.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: No supplementary.
Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Good afternoon again, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister mentioned in her Statement that with the grocery stores there was a savings of \$750,000. Was that based on . . . I didn't know if it was based on actual sales, and for a year or what time period that was.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: So, as included in my Statement, the Affordable Bermuda Basket was nine months of relief that was provided in collaboration with private sector retailers and wholesalers. And so the number that was listed reflects the participation for nine months of those who submitted data. What also should be known is that not every participant submitted data, so the Ministry wasn't informed to be able to give the total, or more wholesome, picture. But at present, based on what was received by the Ministry, we did have a cumulative \$750[,000] total. Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sure.

The Minister also talked about milk, and we heard also from the Premier that potential milk might be coming from the Azores, Portugal.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You didn't say that? What did you say?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We did not say those things.

The Speaker: They were looking at all sorts of options.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, all sorts of options. Milk was one of those.

The Speaker: It was a fact-finding visit.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: It was a fact-finding visit.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes.
I heard [the Premier] say milk.

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [The Premier] did say milk.
Did you not say milk?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to point-of-order you.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Did you say milk?

The Speaker: No, no. We're trying not to go [to a] point of order. Just move on, move on, move on.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: [Restate] your question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So, to the Minister, concerning milk, there's no—

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You certainly don't answer nothing. You ain't got no room to talk.

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Let's direct your question [INAUDIBLE].

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The question is: Has a look or study been looked into on how, if we're importing milk . . . which was one of those things that was stated—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

There has not been any suggestion around the importation of milk. What was stated, it is clearly in the Statement, [was] that Azores has expertise in dairy

production. And, given that we would like to boost our domestic production,—

The Speaker: I did say you were on a fact-finding visit.

Hon. E. David Burt: —we are looking for experts to help to come assist. Not for importation of milk.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He was looking at cows.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What I'm trying to find out is whether or not we've looked at . . . if we're looking at all of these options on how that will also affect the local production of milk as well.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's all.

The Speaker: I believe the Statement [said it] was basically a fact-finding mission.

But, Minister, if you want to respond. You want . . . no?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's about time.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's about time? Oh, please.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.
And perhaps it's just my—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Gentleman.
Premier, Premier. Deputy [Premier].
Deputy. Deputy. Deputy. Deputy!
Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! And I'm ending it. I'm ending it right now.

Whip! You guys are going to find yourselves out of here in a minute. Real quickly.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [INAUDIBLE] —outside.

The Speaker: No, no. I'm going to . . . no, no, no.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I am suggesting that you take a little cool-off-minute before I put you out.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No, no, no, no. Your response. No, no, no, no. No.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I'm not putting you out. I'm asking you to take a little breather and come back. Take a little breather and come back.

Whip. Please. Take a little breather. Come back.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Take a walk.

The Speaker: And I think you should join him.
Join him.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm walking.

The Speaker: Because I just started and you continued. Now join him.
Join him.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Out!

We're going to move on to your next Statement. The next Statement had questions from MP Robinson [also].

Would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Is the Minister aware that the IRP 2026 was approved by the Regulatory Authority on July 3, 2026?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for his question—

The Speaker: Have fun, Sarge!

[Laughter]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —the IRP being finalised was not known to the Ministry. So, I do invite what he has referenced.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, the IRP 2026 is currently published on the Regulatory Authority's website, as of . . . seeing the statement from July 3. So, my supplementary is: Is there currently a breach, then, of the current policy, as the pause can only go into effect on an IRP that is in planning and not one that is finalised?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I will invite further clarity from the technical team, and I will let the Honourable Member know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The [Minister] has indicated she'll get the right answer for you.

Do you have a supplementary, second supplementary, or second question?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: You're done?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: MP Linda Smith, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you very much.

In the Statement, the Minister said that there were inconsistencies between the national policy and what was in the IRP. And my question is: What were those inconsistencies that would have caused [the Minister] to make a determination that she wanted to suspend the process?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Since the beginning of my journey, I have sought an array of technical input from those who have successfully supported larger and arguably more progressive electricity sectors both in other comparable Caribbean islands or . . . and islands, and also the US and Africa. And what was clear is that an IRP that doesn't contemplate current state of a grid, which is, to

what extent can new technologies even be connected to it, was an omission. And so, the public transparency of grid conditions and the impact that, for example, new technologies, could have to the grid to current users was one of the areas that was raised. Additionally, I think it is also prudent for a government, in forecasting a future sector, to also consider the workforce that it seeks to empower to take that role.

I identified as part of my May 2025 ministerial directive that capacity building was important. The existence of one consultant for a long period of time could suggest a number of things. But I thought it was prudent for us to build capacity so that Bermudians could take their rightful role in our electricity sector in a more diverse way.

Also, there were questions around procurement. You would note that the procurement process regarding the old IRP from 2019 had not advanced to the extent that it did. And so, I do question the players and the intentions that would rush to get, having signalled, having consulted, having engaged that from 2019 until present there was an absence of progress. The Ministry would signal, communicate, consult, and say, these are our intentions.

We accept that we, as a Government, were delayed in our policy. And so, in one year did a robust process to both get an updated policy reflective of not only the future sector but the current sector in Bermuda. We would do that. We would signal. We would have biweekly meetings with the Regulatory Authority, inform them of the fact that we wished to do that.

And so, I do find it interesting that, you know, there could be a rush at the same time that we're seeking to pause it to right-size the transition. And the question then becomes: Whom does it serve?

The Ministry represents the people. It represents the cost. It represents what we have allowed and committed to have oversight over, and that is around advancing affordability. And so, the structures and systems that could enhance transparency, I do invite those things because we collaboratively in Bermuda require and can do better on behalf of the people. I think one of the colleagues spoke earlier to the increase in cost for distributed DG [Distributed Generator] customers, the customers who would have their own solar deployed.

This shouldn't be a space where for years there have been residential customers and those who don't have solar technologies deployed in their home paying the cost that they would be benefiting from.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Time has run out on the Question Period this morning, Members. Thank you for your participation. [We will move on] to the next item on the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: I'm going to acknowledge MP from [constituency] 28 first, MP Lister.

MP Lister, you have the floor for three minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You will understand why. Go ahead, MP.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first off give obituary and condolences to the family of a young Dr. Jocelyn [Patrice] Nzabalinda, who passed recently. Her maiden name [was] Woodson. I'd like to recognise her father, who actually travelled from overseas to—

The Speaker: He's in the Gallery now.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —Bermuda. He's in the [Gallery] now. They will be holding a memorial for her before she has a full funeral overseas back home.

She was a physical therapist—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you to the House.

She was a physical therapist and not only was her husband a friend of our family, but in her role as a physical therapist she actually . . . My grandmother, your mother, was a client of hers. So, we knew her in a professional and a familiar sense.

So again, I'd like to send condolences to her father, her mother, and her siblings, and all of her friends and extended family.

On a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations to . . . In volleyball, the under-20 women's volleyball championships won a gold medal in St. Kitts recently. And the two young ladies, Olivia Gazzard and Isabella Souza, won gold medals at the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association.

Also winning awards, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Caitlin Bobb finished third at the Jerome Classic in British Columbia. And this is as she warms up to compete in the Commonwealth Games soon coming, so it's good that she's placing on the podium in her warm-ups.

And then young Sakari Famous, she won gold medal in high jumps . . . I associate—

An Hon. Member: Associate the House.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —I associate the whole House.

She won gold medal in high jump at the Ed Murphey Classic in Tennessee.

So, Mr. Speaker, as always, these are Bermudians, young and a little bit older, representing Bermuda on the international stage and competing and doing well.

But lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to send congratulations. And I will associate the whole House on the recent acknowledgement of Flora Duffy, her retirement from the triathlete world.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I see the Minister of Sport. I will let him make further comments. I won't go too far. But Ms. Duffy winning and representing Bermuda on a very big stage, the Triathlons, Olympic Games, winning gold medals and all. She has definitely put Bermuda on the spot. And so, in her retirement, we wish her well and that hopefully she can use her experience, come back and train and pass it on to young Bermudians.

And I do, before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, just also in my comments on condolences to Dr. Nzabalinda, I forgot to mention her husband, Zakary, also. So again, I'd like to send condolences to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Sport, would you like your three minutes now?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, I will.

The Speaker: I think you got a launching pad that time.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on the spirit of cricket and one of Bermuda's national sports,—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —I'd like to start here, Mr. Speaker. And I know it may not be directly Bermudian, but it is definitely connected to Bermuda.

I would like to acknowledge and send condolences to all cricket fans as the sad news has come in this morning of the passing of Sir Garfield Sobers, one of the greatest cricketers, as they say, of all time, a West Indies all-rounder and a legend. Also, for those Bajans, who are part of our community, he is a national hero of his native Barbados. And while I say cricket fans in Bermuda would have received this news with sadness, as many of us know that Barbados was one of the places, especially in the 1980s, where many Bermudians used to flock to take part in the West [Indies] Test Cricket that used to happen around April every year. So, that news has come in, and I just want to send

condolences to all cricket fans as this news has come in.

And on that same note, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to cricket, I want to turn the tide a little bit and say congratulations to Ms. Terry-Lynn Paynter, who is a Bermudian. Many would know Terry-Lynn in her time as a thrower in track and field recently. But Terry-Lynn Paynter has been appointed as head coach of the America's Next Generation Women's Team. Ms. Paynter is also the vice president of the Eastern Counties Cricket Association, and they are embarking on, I would say one of the greatest cricket tournaments that we have here in Bermuda, the Eastern County, which starts tomorrow with the Holders champions. Cleveland County Cricket Club will be taking on Bailey's Bay—

Hon. E. David Burt: Bailey all the way.

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I want to say congratulations to all of the cricketers who have been . . . been . . .

An Hon. Member: Selected.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Selected (thank you) to take part in the first round of the Eastern County, which is tomorrow at Lord's. And we will be there bright and early in our blue and white, as those boys, as they say, from Harris Bay, they are Devils' Hole boys—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: (There is no hole like Devil's Hole.) —go down to hold the Cup at Eastern County tomorrow.

And finally, in the last 30 seconds that I have, the headlines around the world are *one of the greatest athletes of all time*. And I'd like to, as I've already put in the public domain I want to put on the floor of the House, [say] congratulations and job well done to Dame Flora Duffy—Bermuda's only Olympic gold medalist—for the stellar career that she has had as a triathlete around the world. Much has been said, and much will be said, about her amazing career. And I want to say job well done to Flora Duffy.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Opposition Leader, would you like your three minutes?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, I want to follow along where he Honourable Minister just left off and be associated with the remarks for Flora Duffy.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: It's already been associated with everybody, but I just want to make sure, obviously, as somebody who coached her when she was a young swimmer in Bermuda—

Some Hon. Members: Aww!

An Hon. Member: I got you. I got you.

Hon. Ben Smith: —this is a long process.

The truth of the matter is starting at Port Royal Primary School with the gym programme there, thanking Mr. Custodio for taking her on those runs during lunchtime and building that love for the running. She has been a passionate athlete from the time of those early schoolgirl days, and to see that she went from those early beginnings all the way to the podium for Bermuda, winning that gold medal. Congratulations for a long career where she did Bermuda proud all over the world. *Thank you for representing us at the highest level.*

I hope that we'll see her do many more things in this next phase of her life. I did have an opportunity to talk to her when the King visited, and she was trying to figure out what she was going to do next. So, continue to put in that same level of effort in whatever your next endeavour is, and congratulations for that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to say good luck to all of our athletes that have . . . some have already started to travel for both the CAC Games and Commonwealth Games that will happen in the period while the House is not in session. We have an almost record number of athletes who will be participating in CAC Games in Dominican Republic, and a very strong team also going to Glasgow for Commonwealth Games.

Bermuda has continued to punch above its weight, as we just spoke about with Flora Duffy. Good luck to all of the athletes, all the administrators, and all the coaches who have done a lot of hard work over this last season to prepare these athletes to compete for Bermuda. So best of luck to all of them. [We are] looking forward to seeing what the performances will be at both those games.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Before I call on anybody, I just want to acknowledge, because they are about to leave, I just want to acknowledge that Dr. Woodson is in the Chamber, as we said earlier, and add my condolences to it.

It's nice to have you visit with us. It is unfortunate under the circumstances but feel free anytime you're in Bermuda again to come visit in our Chambers.

And in acknowledging you, I'd also like to acknowledge our very own, Dr. Shammah Williams, who brought him in this afternoon. And I assume that's Joycelyn's brother next to you?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: No? Okay. Well, all right.

Well, condolences to the family, and our thoughts and prayers are with you at this time, Doctor. Best to you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, continuing]

The Speaker: Minister, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with heavy heart that I would like condolences sent to the family of Winston Kelly, [PHONETIC] who passed away yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Winston Kelly is my former father-in-law and grandfather to my daughter. Obviously, I've known them quite well and travelled with Mr. Kelly. I know one of our favourite moments was taking him to his first NFL football game in Tampa Bay, Florida, on one family vacation that we were on. He will be sorely missed by the Hamilton Parish community, by Better [Covenant] Christian Fellowship of which he was an elder. And my deepest condolences sent to his wife, Marjorie Kelly, [PHONETIC] as they navigate. And of course, his daughter, my ex-wife and mother to my daughter, Leticia, [PHONETIC] as they navigate this difficult time.

On a brighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to associate myself with all the accolades to all the athletes, and especially to the Eastern County and Cleveland County.

Mr. Speaker, I know this one . . . this one . . . I've had on my notes, but I'm just really getting to it. I'd also like to send congratulations to the congregation of St. Philip AME, that little church by the Sound, who celebrated 100 years in their current location.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And associate MP Tucker as well.

[They] celebrated 100 years in their current location in Harrington Sound, back in June. I'll be back

here again in October. They will be celebrating 141 years of ministry—41 years, of course, happened in that other place known as Tucker's Town, before they were forced to relocate to their current location. So definitely, congratulations.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Congratulations to that and, hopefully, later on I will speak a little bit more to that during motion to adjourn.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Scott, you were on your feet earlier.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want the House to send letters of congratulations (I'm a little conflicted doing it during this time of year) to the Dolan [PHONETIC] family from St. George's as they have expanded their gas station locations to take over the East Broadway gas station. And so, for me, as a small business, I would think that that's a big deal. And I like the fact that they are trending towards the west. So hopefully that will speak to their Cup Match allegiance as well.

But I wanted to really just make sure that—

An Hon. Member: That's a stretch.

[Laughter]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I just wanted to make sure that we send congratulations and let just to know that small businesses are thriving and growing here in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister Dill.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of the late Vivienne Louise Anderson. She is a retired Episcopal supervisor in the AME church. She was born and raised in Somerset. And then she and her beau, who is the late Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson, who was the first Bermudian to be elected to the episcopacy in the AME church, made their home overseas and they made an impact on the world stage. Mrs. Anderson was an outstanding role model. She was a lady of both excellence and elegance. She represented Bermuda well as she supported her husband as he made inroads, as a trailblazer, as a change-maker, and as a leader par excellent. So, we certainly will miss her. She lived to be 95 years of age, and she was funeralised last week in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to offer condolences to the family of Mrs. Lynda Orletta Bean. She is the

mother of Terrence and Jonathan Bean and Dawnika Ebbin. She is a resident of constituency 36 and she was the lady who—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —and I'd like to associate, yes, MP Robin—

An Hon. Member: Tucker.

The Speaker: Robinson, he grew up [INAUDIBLE].

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: MP Dwayne Robinson—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —with those condolences.

And Mrs. Lynda Bean, she was a founding member of Agape Faith Fellowship. She was a wonderful lady, and she will be deeply missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . MP Swan, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to be associated with the condolences offered by the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture [and Sport] to the people of Barbados and the family of the late Sir Garfield Sobers. I had the honour of knowing Mr. Sobers because Mr. Sobers used to spend time in Bermuda with his connection with Trusthouse Forte and his love for golf. So, we had opportunities to play golf in the past at Riddell's Bay.

I remember fondly posing the question to him: *How did he play his innings in?* Relating it to my discipline of trying to get settled first before you got on a roll. He said, *I took every ball on its merit, and if it came wrong first ball, it was going long.* And I never forgot that, and it actually changed my philosophy and approach to playing. I looked for the opportunities early rather than waiting to be played in. And he was certainly a global hero, and he followed the three Ws: the Weekes, the Worrells . . . and what was the other "W"?

An Hon. Member: Walcott.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And Walcott. That's right. Great, great, great cricketers.

And he remembered my Uncle Sheridan Raynor when I played with them because Sheridan was a well-respected left-hand batsman, opening batsman, early order batsman. And [Mr.] Sobers has had many connections here with the late Charles Daulphin and others. I'm sure Alma "Champ" Hunt as well.

I would like, through the Bermuda Football Association, to have a letter sent to the Cabo Verde football national team, who Bermuda played as a warm-up just prior to the World Cup. They have shown what sport can do for a nation. More people are googling Cabo Verde today because of their national programmes. And they, like Bermuda, do not have a lot of First Division players. They have a lot of players situated in Ireland, like we did with the late Freddie Hall Jr., who played in the Irish League, and they have lower league players. But they came together as a country and showed the world.

And what's ironic is that Cabo Verde did not lose against Spain, the finalists. And they did not lose in 90 minutes, full-time, against Argentina, who are the two finalists. That shows you that small nations can punch above their weight.

And finally, I didn't get an opportunity to express my profound gratitude for the movie-produced documentary on what many Bermudans believe should be Sir Clyde Best. I was somewhat disappointed in the honours to not see it there. If anybody, and I don't care what you think and why you think it, but if anybody traversed this world singularly in a sport, I have a little experience in that,—

[Timer chimes]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —that man did it to the highest order and deserves his accolades globally, just like [Mr.] Sobers.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Lightbourne?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I quickly rise just to acknowledge and also send condolences to the family and friends and to the community relating to the death and the passing of Mr. Kenneth “Kenny” DeFontes, not only as a Minister responsible for telecommunications and broadcasting, having a personal connection with my father, having been once employed at VSB back in the day. And I want to just acknowledge his contribution to the broadcasting segment through television services, providing entertainment—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —associating MP Swan with this—

An Hon. Member: The whole House.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —and the whole House on the passing of just a broadcasting giant, who kind of knew . . . and I was a product of his time and was able

to not only innovate but to be able to produce what we then learnt or had as one of two evening night news reports. And so, I want to just acknowledge his commitment to his daughters who are mourning his loss and to his family and his special friends. So, I want to just acknowledge that today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to offer condolences to the family of the late Perry Mason.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Mason was a constituent of mine. He was the husband of Francine Mason, and the father of Janee, Sydney, and Ryley Mason. I want to send condolences to the family at this sad time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Got you.

I associate MP Weeks.

On a brighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like the House to offer congratulations to Dr. Katurah Horton-Perinchief (I think your constituent) who recently was awarded her doctoral degree in public health leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to . . . MP Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I wish to send condolences to the family of the Seventh-day Adventist family, and that will be in the name of Mrs. Carol Bassett and also of, I believe, Lorraine Simon.

The Speaker: Associate yourself. It was done last week.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Oh, I apologise. They were done last week? I will take my seat.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no.

Mr. Scott Simmons: I associate myself. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: Go right ahead. I'm not sitting you down. I'm not sitting you, but you can associate yourself with [the one done] last week. That's all.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in association with those comments made last week, I knew Carol Bassett. We know in education, she served most admirably, and certainly in the church family she served. She was my sabbath schoolteacher. She was rather strict, but she was certainly interested in us as young people. And as a result, you see the product.

Also, I'd like to mention Lorraine Simons, Sister Lorraine Simons, who certainly was a fixture of Southampton Church, of the Adventist Church. And there are so many in our community who are associated with their churches, turn out so many good young people and are interested in the well-being both of those young people and of the church at large.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other?

There are none other.

Before we move on, I'd just like to add my sentiments to some of the remarks that have been said already. I'll start with some of the last ones through the remarks that were given to the family of Lorraine Simons. I think we all know her son, Owen Simons, and the choir that he directs. Well, we send condolences to his father and sister and the entire family.

To the condolences given just now to the Bean family for Lynda Bean. I've known Lynda for a number of years. But in my early days in political life, I represented at Dockyard, and she was one of those in the Dockyard area. Like Mr. Robinson's family, who worked real hard with us in Dockyard back then. So, Mr. Robinson, I understand why you want to be associated too. So, my condolences go to her family.

But in this Chamber, her son, Terrence, handles most of our technical stuff behind Mr. [Derek] Lamb here. So, we feel it here, and I send our condolences to him as well.

And to the remarks on the passing of Perry Mason, to his wife, Francine, my condolences are shared with those that have been sent already.

With that, we'll move on [to] the next item on the Order Paper today.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are three Government Bills to be introduced this afternoon.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: The first [Government Bill] is in the name of the Premier.

BILL

FIRST READING

TRUSTEE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, and that is the Trustee Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next Bill to be introduced is in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, namely, the Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next item is in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

BILL

FIRST READING

MOTOR CAR AND AUXILIARY BICYCLES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Motor Car and Auxiliary Bicycles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2026.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Opposition Bills

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Private Members' Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTION

The Speaker: There are no Notice of Motion.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: I had indicated to the Premier and Opposition Leader that I was going to make an announcement at this time. I've been stuck in the Chair and didn't resolve what I needed to, so I will make sure it gets done before the day ends under all of this.

So, the first item this afternoon is the second reading of the Corporate Tax Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

BILL

SECOND READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government to rise this afternoon in this Honourable House to introduce and lead the debate on the Bill entitled, the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026.

This Bill proposes amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 to provide miscellaneous updates to enhance Bermuda's corporate income tax regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax returns. It proposes to make consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the Corporate Income Tax Act has been in force since December 2023, with most of the Act operational from January 2025. And Bermuda has now entered the full operative phase of the corporate income tax. As the regime has moved forward, several components have required refinement to ensure the framework remains aligned with international standards, reflects practical implementation needs, and provides clarity for both taxpayers and administrators.

The Corporate Income Tax Agency continued with its standard practice of public consultation on proposed amendments to the CIT Act, accompanied with the publication of an illustrative Bill. We have taken the time to review all valuable feedback received to support the development of robust and practical legislation as we continue to evolve our framework.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments relate to providing for the better administration of the corporate income tax regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax returns. The Government finds that there is a need to ensure [that] the administration of the corporate income tax is founded upon clear legal principles. Therefore, the purpose of these amendments is to clarify and refine the existing provisions to ensure that the Corporate Income Tax Agency is given the administrative and operational mechanisms to effectively oversee and administer the corporate income tax regime.

Mr. Speaker, for those changes, consequential amendments were proposed to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024 to ensure the legislation remains aligned with the updated corporate income tax framework. The consequential amendment clarifies the enforcement regime to be applied by the Corporate Income Tax Agency.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to emphasise the Government remains confident that Bermuda's corporate tax framework upholds Bermuda's strong commitment to global compliance and transparency while maintaining the Island's respected reputation internationally, or I should say boosting it, certainly, as we cannot be referred to as a tax haven. The progress achieved thus far has been made possible through the invaluable contribution of the International Tax Working Group, whose expertise and dedication continue to play a central role in advancing this important initiative.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: No fighting now.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Doctor DeCouto.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am going to knock . . . at a good time.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. E. David Burt: I would like to sincerely thank everyone in the Ministry of Finance, the Corporate Income Tax Agency, along with our dedicated advisors, for the time, effort, and expertise that have contributed to this work.

I also extend my appreciation to the drafting team at the Attorney General's Chambers for their valued support throughout this process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment at this time?

MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we definitely support this Bill. You know, we did review the consultation documents. We did our own [due] diligence and research and [we are] also grateful to the Ministry of Finance for reaching out to us in case we needed any clarifications. So, as always, we are appreciative of the efforts of the Finance Minister and Premier and his Financial Secretary and that team.

The Premier mentioned clarity. He mentioned enforcement. We know that in Bermuda one of the benefits of our jurisdictions is, in fact, regulatory clarity. People know what they're signing up for. They can be confident in how it's going to progress. They know how situations will be handled in the law and in our judicial system. And so, we are also glad to see that issues around . . . I don't want to say "issues," but, you know, certain clarifications have been made with respect to the Corporate Income Tax Agency enforcement.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do support this Bill. And are glad to see it forming part of this important part of Bermuda's economic success.

But, we wish—

Some Hon. Members: Aah!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But, Mr. Speaker, we wish the Government—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —could bring this kind of clarity,—

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —collaboration, and success in the many other areas challenging this country.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

No other Member?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of the Opposition, and I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: MP . . . Deputy Premier? Deputy—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You're not putting me back on the naughty step are you?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, would you take the Chair to move the House—

[Pause]

House in Committee at 3:05 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members. I'm a bit hoarse. I lost my voice. I don't know how.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Chairman: Yes, it's from that.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: We are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: But you see our Somerset supporters [INAUDIBLE]. I'll give you water because we know—

The Chairman: This is St. George's—

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, don't worry because—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There will be plenty of water up there.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam [Chairman], you are hoarse today; you are going to be crying tomorrow.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: No tears.

Hon. E. David Burt: No tears?

The Chairman: No tears.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I would like to move all the clauses.

The Chairman: It has been moved that all clauses be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Before I go to clause 1, just the overview again for the purpose, for the record, that this Bill seeks to amend the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 to provide for the better administration of the corporate income tax regime, to better facilitate the filing of tax returns and to make consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024.

The Government finds there is a need to ensure that the administration of the corporate income tax is founded upon clear legal principles. Therefore, the purpose of these amendments is to clarify and refine the existing provisions to ensure that the corporate income tax agency is given the administrative and operational mechanisms to effectively oversee and administer the corporate income tax regime.

If I may now, clauses 1 through 17.

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the interpretation under section 2 by removing redundant definitions and inserting a new definition for “five-year election.”

Clause 3 amends section 6 to provide additional provisions for the calculation of the opening tax loss carry forward and adjustments that may arise in relation to the calculations.

Clause 4 provides for additional clarification to section 7 to ensure that the provisions within section 7 are consistent with each other.

Clause 5 amends section 15 to provide greater clarity over elections that can be made by segregated accounts companies.

Clause 6 amends section 15(1)A . . . sorry.

The Chairman: [Section] 15A.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes. [Section] 15A. I want to make sure I get it right for the Hansard.

Clause 6 amends section 15A to correct a typographical error.

Clause 7 amends section 18 to correct a typographical error.

Clause 8 inserts a new subsection under section 21 to address the issues arising where there is a mismatch between the financial reporting period for a Bermuda Constituent Entity and the period used by its ultimate parent entity in preparing consolidated financial statements for the group.

Clause 9 amends the marginal note in section 24 so that it better reflects the contents of the section.

Clause 10 amends the marginal note in section 25 so that it better reflects the contents of the section.

Clause 11 amends section 30 to correct a typographical error.

Clause 12 amends section 46B by providing that penalties that are assessed by reference to the time elapsed continue to accrue for so long as a default is outstanding, notwithstanding the date on which a taxpayer is notified of the penalty and providing also that penalties calculated by reference to outstanding amounts shall be automatically recalculated where the underlying outstanding amount changes due to amendments to tax returns.

Clause 13 amends section 46D to provide greater clarity in the calculation of penalties for the failure to file a return by the due date and also provides in subsection (3) that a penalty may not be imposed for an indefinite period.

Clause 14 amends section 46F to correct a typographical error.

Clause 15 amends section 49 to address the additional flexibility in making and revoking a five-year election.

Clause 16 inserts a new section 49A to grant the Agency power to permit a revocation of an election within the five-year election period as defined under section 2.

And finally, Madam Chairman, clause 17 provides for a consequential amendment to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024 to clarify the enforcement

regime to be applied by the Corporate Income Tax Agency.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the clauses?

There are not.

Premier, continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I move that clauses 1 through 17 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 17 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are not.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 17 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I move the preamble.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections? There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:10 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported as printed.

That will take us on to the next item on the Order Paper this afternoon, which is the second reading of the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors. Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act of 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

BILL

SECOND READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce in this Honourable House today a Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026. I would like to start by sharing with Honourable Members and the listening public this meaningful quote by Barbra Streisand: "How I wish we lived in a time when laws were not necessary to safeguard us from discrimination." This quote reinforces our reality and the importance of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Human Rights Act of 1981, on the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission [HRC], to close gaps in Bermuda's anti-discriminatory protections, particularly in housing, and the provision of goods, facilities, and services. It protects people who rely on government financial support from being refused housing or services on that basis, and a landlord's exception that currently permits discrimination in certain residential buildings, and prohibits discrimination against a person because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill aims to strengthen and improve the Government's social protections for persons within the community by closing identified gaps in Bermuda's current human rights legislation. These proposed amendments ensure the public have further human rights protections on specific matters, and the HRC maintains international standards.

Mr. Speaker, despite the existing protections with the Human Rights Act of 1981 against discrimination regarding accommodation, an exception set out in section 4(4)(a) allows landlords to discriminate in relation to letting one or two independent units in the building in which they or their family reside, a familiar arrangement in Bermuda. It is evident from the feedback

provided that members in our community are being discriminated against while residing in such accommodation and seeking to rent these properties in Bermuda. Ultimately, this frustrates the fundamental human right recognised in international law, the right to housing, at a time when the Island is facing a housing crisis.

Also, it prevents the Human Rights Act aligning with human rights legislation in similar jurisdictions, such as, Turks and Caicos, and the Cayman Islands, who have not included a similar exception. Mr. Speaker, currently under the Human Rights Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against, harass, or victimise individuals based on the following protected characteristics: race, colour, place of origin, ethnic and national origin, sex, sexual orientation, family status, marital status or domestic partnership status, disability, religion or belief, political opinion, criminal record, and in certain circumstances, age.

However, there is no protected characteristic that prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person receiving government funding, which was introduced under specific legislation, such as the Financial Assistance Act of 2001 and the Child Day Care Allowance Act of 2008, to ensure an individual can maintain a basic standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, although members of the community are protected from discrimination based on their own protected characteristics, as outlined in the Human Rights Act at present, these protected characteristics do not extend to persons who associate with them. As a result, the Human Rights Act fails to provide protection from discrimination by association when a person is denied an employment opportunity due to the political opinions of an individual that they associate with. This currently is not discriminatory under the law. Or a landlord refuses to rent an apartment to an individual because their cousin has a criminal record or their business partner is from the Philippines. Both examples are not deemed discriminatory under the current law.

The Speaker: He needs a jacket. He needs a jacket.

Sarge, sort him out, please.

Yes, continue.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission held several consultations with stakeholders representing various sectors of our community, such as members of the public, government units and departments, advisory and regulatory bodies, i.e., Ageing and Disability Services, Age Concern and the Disability Advisory Council. Participants had the opportunity to provide information about challenges they experienced, or experiences they were aware of other people experiencing when seeking, occupying or purchasing housing, discriminatory practices against persons receiving financial assistance and child day care allowance, which are financially supported, governed by legislation, to ensure an individual can maintain a basic standard of living, and discrimination experienced

because of a person's association with another, based on, for example, the race, colour, or political opinions associated with the individual.

The amendments, Mr. Speaker, are grounded in the Human Rights Commission's consultation process. A stakeholder's consultation from 4 November through 31 December 2022 . . . 37 stakeholders invited, 6 provided feedback, in an island-wide public consultation from 23 March to 14 April 2023, [with] 44 anonymous public responses.

These serve as concrete discrimination with no recourse under the current Human Rights Act, including landlords refusing tenants who receive financial assistance, rental advertisements labelled "no financial assistance," and complaints to the Human Rights Commission, where section 4(4)(a) stripped the complainant of any remedy under section 4(1).

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to our stakeholders, and this Bill is part of our response in addressing their concerns. This Bill proposes to amend the Human Rights Act by removing provisions in legislation that currently allow landlords to discriminate against persons in relation to the letting of one or two independent units in the building in which they or their family reside, introducing protections against discrimination based on an individual being in receipt of government funding, specifically financial assistance, financial assistance short-term relief benefit, and the child day care allowance, and include provisions that prohibit discrimination because of a person's association with another person.

Mr. Speaker, these protections available under the Human Rights Act were based on the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proclaimed by the United Nations. The proposed amendments set out in the Bill uphold these foundations and increase the effectiveness of the Human Rights Act. The Bill expressly guarantees [that] legal protections are introduced into the Human Rights Act to ensure persons in the community seeking housing, or residing in rented accommodations, are treated equally and their rights are protected from discrimination and harassment.

Persons who are in receipt of a financial assistance award and a child day care allowance are protected against discrimination based on being in receipt of government funding. And persons who are experiencing discrimination because they are associated with another person, their rights are protected from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and marginalisation.

Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission will exercise their authority under section 14B of the Act to prepare and publish public guidelines on the meaning of family status and on what may be considered valid reasons relevant to the nature of a particular offence in section 2(2)(a)(vii). To safeguard vulnerable persons in a landlord's family, children, persons with disabilities and seniors, where a person convicted of

certain offences seeks accommodations in a unit adjacent to such a family.

Mr. Speaker, the strengthening of our human rights legislation removes limitations on person's human dignity, respect and the right to equal treatment that is owed to all members of our community. This Government supports the empowerment and protection of our people through this Bill. These amendments are intended as phase one of a multi-stage review of the Human Rights Act to address protections needed within Bermuda's human rights legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like for us to be reminded of the words of Malcolm X, "I believe in human beings, and that all human beings should be respected as such, regardless of their colour."

In closing, I would like to add I believe in human beings and that human beings should be respected as such regardless of any characteristics such as their race, place of origin, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital or domestic partnership status, disability, family status, religion, political opinion or criminal record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

MP Tucker, you have the floor.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you. Thank you very much to the Minister. (Sorry, I have an issue with my microphone.) Thank you very much to the Minister for bringing this Bill.

I will be very honest. I struggled with this a little bit. And I struggled with it because how I am viewing this Bill is through the lens of everyday people. And while we are in here to make legislation, after we pass these Bills everyday people are going to be impacted by whatever decisions that are made. And that causes me a lot of anxiety because I understand and acknowledge the weight that we all collectively carry when we pass legislation in this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I do not disagree with anything that the Minister has just said. I do not think that there's anybody in this House that would agree with outwardly discriminating against people for any reason. At least I would hope not. But, Mr. Speaker, when I read this Bill . . . and first of all . . . sorry, I want to just go back and say thank you to the Minister because she did invite me and Senate and a few others, along with the Human Rights Commission, to review the proposed changes that they were going to make. But, Mr. Speaker, when I consider the potential impact that making some of these changes will have, it keeps me up. Like, it worries me. Because, again, I am looking

at it through the lens of when everyday people are impacted by the decisions that are made in here.

I do not believe that there is . . . I think the intent of the Bill is great. I think it's wonderful. But, to me, there are some pieces that I actually would like to see and have some assurance about. Because I know that everyday Bermudians are going to want to have that assurance as well.

So, broadly, there is going to be a section that, as the Minister mentioned, that talks about prohibiting discrimination by association. Mr. Speaker, we don't have a statutory definition for that. Which actually leaves the whole concept very broad. And that's a little problematic in my mind because, again, we are being asked . . . I understand that guidelines will be coming and the like. But we are being asked to support and approve a Bill without having the fulsome information that's going to impact everyday Bermudians.

Now, I understand, again, that the guidelines will be coming. But how are we going to make sure that granny understands what those guidelines are? Because that's going to be important. Because she's going to be impacted. We have a number of people who currently rent their dwelling units. And what we're saying is that those people do not have the ability, or will not have the ability, in the strictest of sense, to say who and who they do not wish to have in their units.

Now, again, I will circle back to what I originally said. And that is, no, we don't want to discriminate against people, anyone. But, again, there is a fine line between not discriminating against tenants, but then discriminating against—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member is unintentionally misleading the House. A landlord can still decide who they will put in their rental unit, Mr. Speaker. So, I don't want to go down this road, Mr. Speaker, saying that we are removing landlords' rights, because we are not.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, since we're there, there is a section that is being removed from the [Act]. It's a section that actually speaks to owners being prohibited from discrimination in renting units, buildings with two or three family units, where the owner occupies one, or if the owner's family occupies one.

So, I'm not . . . And, again, I would invite the Minister at some point to be able to provide some additional clarification, because I did submit some questions to her about that. But, again, I'm looking at this

through the lens of how this will be interpreted by everyday people, by landlords.

I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, how difficult it is to ensure that we have adequate housing stock. Right? Because we all know in here that there are people with apartments who have decided that they will not rent, whether it's to Bermudians or Black people, White people, whatever. They've just decided to take them off the market. So, we have one situation that we are trying to fix. But we could be potentially creating—unintentionally, I should say—another issue.

So, to my mind, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is putting the cart before the horse. To my mind, Mr. Speaker, we should be debating right now the Landlord and Tenant Act. We need to get that sorted first before we start traversing down a road that will have potential negative impacts for people.

I would ask the Minister, or I would invite the Minister, to let us know at some point if the guidelines that have been mentioned, which will be created by the Human Rights Commission . . . how does the Government intend to support small landlords in their understanding and applying the new discrimination by association provision, given its breadth and its potential complexity?

I would also like to know, Mr. Speaker, has the Government conducted any assessment of the potential impact on rental supply resulting from the removal of section 4(4)(a), protections for landlords? And if so, would the Minister be willing to table that report?

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to know when does the Government intend to bring forward a modernised Landlord and Tenant Act to ensure that expanded human rights obligations are supported by a coherent rental framework?

When we think of all those things, Mr. Speaker, I would ask a question, because we've all heard the stories. I rented to people who were on financial assistance. Right? I've done that. I've rented apartments for aeons. And I've had some great experiences. But I've also equally had experiences that have not been great. They have been nightmares. So, what protections do we have for landlords? Because if we're talking about you can't prohibit, or you can't discrim— . . . I think that's the word, yes, discriminate by association . . . we're such a small community . . . let's talk about the practicalities of these things.

So, we are a small community. And so, if Cousin JJ is involved in a gang, the whole community knows it. And he's coming to rent granny's apartment, and she's the only one living there. And she doesn't want that person in there because she understands. She's lived in the neighbourhood long enough. She knows the individuals. So, we're saying that granny could potentially be called before a Human Rights Tribunal to explain why she, at 80 years old, doesn't want somebody who is deemed unsavoury living in her house?

I have no concern, Mr. Speaker, again, about making sure that we are not discriminating against people. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that we make sure that we are balanced. We've got to be balanced, because we could sit in here and pretend that we are living this whole wonderful life and everything will be great. And we will just tell people that this is what they need to do. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, once we all go home and sign off on this—because the Government has the majority, I have no expectation that they're not going to support this Bill—it will be done. But what I want us to remember is that whatever we support here today, or whatever they support here today, will impact every single person in this country.

And I want to end with this, Mr. Speaker. What do we tell the prison officers and the police officers when they have people with criminal records who they've dealt with, and someone that just wants to stir the pot? These are the practicalities and the realities of the things that we are living in this country. And so, then they, other people, get pulled up into the Human Rights Tribunal. And we also heard just earlier today that there's going to be a Landlord and Tenant Tribunal.

So, all I'm asking, Mr. Speaker, is that we rise and report [progress] on this particular Bill so that these types of things and the practical impacts on the community can be totally threshed out. None of us . . . I'm going to reiterate it. None of us want to see anyone discriminated against. We just want to make sure that all our i's are dotted, and all our t's are crossed as best as we can to ensure the best thing for the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Mr. Scott Pearman: He's taller. He's taller, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the last speaker on this side for her insightful remarks.

Mr. Speaker, in another life I was a human rights lawyer in London for 13 years. And every day I would go to court, and I would participate in discrimination claims. So, this is something that I have focused a lot of my life on and something I'm very passionate about. And I commend the particular Minister in relation to this Bill because I know on previous occasions in this House she has brought forward legislation in this area. And I also know that she takes the issue of disability close to her heart.

What disability discrimination is about is protecting certain individuals because they possess a protected characteristic. Now, that's a boring legal term, "protected characteristic." What does that really mean? It means someone's race, someone's gender, someone's disability. It now, and lately in the last decade or so, has come to mean someone's age. And I'll come back to age at the end of my remarks.

When anti-discrimination laws came into effect in the UK decades ago, the focus was initially on the

concept of less favourable treatment. You should not treat someone less favourably than you treat another person, if that someone is a woman and that other person is a man, or that someone is Brown and the other person is Black, et cetera. So, the law quite rightly intervened to prohibit and make illegal less favourable treatment. And that is what is at the heart of discrimination.

Over time, the law expanded beyond less favourable treatment, which was primarily looked at in the workplace, to other areas, such as the provision of facilities, the provision of goods, the provision of services. And just to be very clear, because what this Bill, in essence, is seeking to do today is to introduce a new category of discrimination. A new category of "discrimination by association."

And my colleague, Robin Tucker, MP, pointed out that that is not at present understood to be defined, or at least there's no definition in this Bill or in the primary Act. It may be just defined somewhere else. But the absence of that definition is an extremely concerning factor. And for me, it's one that causes me to say, *Hey, let's just think again. Take a pause, maybe come back on the first sitting in September and deal with it so people know exactly what "discrimination by association" means.*

What this Bill is also seeking to do in that context of discrimination by association is to recognise that those with criminal records will be able to bring claims for discrimination. It will also put in age. And it's also introducing a relatively novel concept, although there are certain jurisdictions that look at source of income as a concept, such as Canada. It's adding something called "receipt of government funding." That is not limited to financial aid. That extends to include those who receive government funding in relation to child care, child schooling support. I believe it's child day care allowance. And so that's the context that we're in.

We're also looking, as the Minister said in her brief, at this issue of the dwindling housing market in Bermuda, and whether and how a government can compel people to make more accessible their . . . I'll use granny flat. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way, but the little flat that may have been built on the property next to granny's house. How can we make sure that those are available in the market where a number of young Bermudians are unable to find housing? And so, this is the Government's response to this.

And I pause there to note that it is unusual, given [in] the Landlord and Tenant Bill that the PLP is bringing forward, [which] has been heralded, that this is not being dealt with in that context as one would expect. Where you look at the rights of tenants and you look at the rights of landlords, you seek to find a balance that is fair for all, as best as possible. And that might then look at how one might legitimately and fairly compel a landlord, granny, to rent out her granny flat and to whom. So, it is slightly unusual that this is being placed in the context of our anti-discrimination legislation.

So, one of the things you want to know when you're dealing with discrimination law, most in the Chamber will already be aware that our discrimination law is contained within our Human Rights Act 1981. The real significance of that Act is that it has the ability to supersede all other legislation.

I see the Speaker nodding his head. He's familiar with that from prior debates.

But it has the ability, effectively, to override every other law that we have on our books in this Island. And given that it has the ability to override all the other laws that we have on our books in this Island, and I put this in a perfectly proper and respectable way, can the Minister ensure the Bermudian public and this Honourable House that she has done all the necessary homework on this and looked at the impacts of this legislative change in relation to those in receipt of government funding and those with criminal records and also age, and the concept of discrimination by association and the impacts it will have on other statutory legislation?

I know that others from other places have already raised with the Minister certain concerns, particularly in relation to the aspect of criminal records. And if criminal records are going to be something that can trump under this Act, and I appreciate criminal records appear elsewhere in the legislation, what is the knock-on effect for that? Will this be an ability for the HRA, the Human Rights Act, which, as I said, is an anti-discrimination Bill on steroids which supersedes other laws, to effectively wreak havoc on other existing laws? And if the Minister stands up and gives the assurance to this House, *Well, actually, that's been done, and we've looked at this, that, or the other*, then obviously one might take comfort in that.

But I do know that those who have raised matters with the Minister, and have copied in Members of this side, have raised some perfectly legitimate questions over what rights might be inadvertently given to those with criminal records in legislation where this Parliament has properly decided that those with criminal records should not have additional rights, or should not be able to override those rights. The example given was whether or not those in prison who are not currently entitled to pensions could then run an argument that that should override that. That was one of the examples given. But, I mean, really, here we are in the realm of unintended consequences.

And, again, like my colleague, [MP] Robin Tucker, we're not opposing this Bill. We are simply inviting the Government to pause for a minute, to rise and report [progress], and to come back in the sitting in September, making sure that that necessary homework is done.

And I will now address a few further matters that we would invite the Government to consider. And I remind ourselves, of course, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. This is certainly well-intentioned. And I recognise that. And it is right and proper,

in my opinion, my personal opinion, to recognise that someone who has done his or her time in incarceration and has served their time and has come out, deserves a clean slate. And I have absolutely no problem with that concept.

I also can see why it would be better to compel or to invite landlords to have an open heart and rent to everyone, no matter whether they may be on financial assistance or not. But one can actually see the response one might get from a landlord. *Well, what if I'm not getting paid?* So, you know, these are fair points, and it's something we would invite the Government to think about. Because I think that when Bermudians realise that the flat next to granny might have someone in it that granny does not want, or that granny feels might not pay the rent, you know, I think that does raise a few questions that are deserving of answers.

And that's probably an appropriate point to just point to the Minister's intervention, which is when she stood up during MP Tucker's presentation to this Honourable House, where she said: *Well, the landlord has a right to choose.*

Now, it is correct in the case of someone with a criminal record that currently the law does provide for a caveat for that. What's not clear is any caveat that may or may not exist in relation to those in receipt of government funding. At present, there is no caveat. And it's something that the Government may wish to consider or, indeed, may have thought was included in this Bill. Because if it is in the Bill, I can't find it. And maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's there. And maybe the Government . . . the Minister's point will be made good in a moment.

Mr. Speaker, just a few more brief points. Then there's the overarching sort of philosophical point. And that takes us back to why in anti-discrimination legislation you have protected characteristics. The most obvious, you know, race, gender, disability, the Minister listed a whole number. It's often said that those are rightly protected characteristics because they are traits that you are born with, or that you acquire, or are a fundamental core belief. Right? And so, when you are legislating in this area one of the things one does need to be careful about is just being too broad in what we presume to be a protected characteristic. The speaker before me has red hair. We don't want everyone with red hair to have the right to break discrimination claims.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Especially from St. George's.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Especially not from St. George's.

I'm looking at one of the Members of the Government's support team here who's wearing glasses, as I do. You know, we wouldn't want that to be a protected characteristic. And I think it is something about which multiple reasonable people could have a legitimate discussion. And I see the Deputy Leader of the Government's now got glasses on. But I think it's

something that multiple people could have a reasonable discussion on whether or not the receipt of government funding is properly a protected characteristic. I have my own personal view, which is probably not to the point. But I see that people could have a reasonable disagreement about that and what it would land on.

I said I'd come back to age, Mr. Speaker. I have actually spoken about this before. Age is being added in relation to discrimination by association. Age is actually a really, really tricky area of disability discrimination law. When I was a student, I studied under a man called Simon Cheetham. He's now King's Counsel in London. He actually wrote the book on age discrimination. And then indeed wrote the ultimate Act on age discrimination.

When we think about age discrimination, we think about mistreating those who are old, those who are elderly. Age discrimination is far more than that. Age discrimination prohibits discrimination on the basis of anyone's age. So, you could discriminate against someone who is young. And one example of unintended consequences was a company called Saga Holidays, who used to . . . I'll pause while the Premier looks at his phone.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Saga Holidays, which used to take . . . that's a great picture.

Hon. E. David Burt: I know. Thank you for the compliment.

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's a nice selfie.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: There was a company called Saga Holidays. And Saga Holidays, their business was to have cruises, but only for those of a certain age, beyond a certain age. And they were sued. They were sued by someone in their 20s who said it was discriminatory not to be able to go on a Saga Holidays cruise.

So, I raise that slightly tongue-in-cheek just to point out that there are unintended consequences when you make changes like this. And, therefore, I do look for an assurance from the Minister either that all the homework has properly been done on this, or if possibly it hasn't, that she will rise and report [progress] and bring this back in September, but just to allow people to have a closer look at it, hopefully to really drill down on the definition of "disability by association."

There are a couple other points I'm going to raise in Committee if we get there, which I'm sure we will because you have the votes, which I also think are just not drafted—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'll be optimistic. Well, maybe we won't. But there are some drafting points that I think require clarity or clarification.

And so, Mr. Speaker, our conclusion is that no matter how well-intentioned this Bill may be, because of the matters that have been raised both by MP Tucker and myself, it would be more sensible just to rise and report [progress] on this one and make sure that we have our t's crossed and i's dotted and come back in September on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.] Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, sir.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought from today we would have looked at this Bill from a lens where Bermuda is taking a step in the right direction. We have to ask ourselves whether or not because one is on financial assistance they should be denied housing in Bermuda. And the examples often give the scenario where granny is making a choice on who she's renting to. But based on the data, the majority of persons on financial assistance are seniors. The vast majority of individuals on financial assistance are seniors. Should our seniors be denied housing because they are on financial assistance? I think we will collectively say: *No, they shouldn't*. And as a result of that, we should do something about it.

The speaker before me spoke about people born into a circumstance. Children are born into socioeconomic conditions. Should a child be denied the right to go to a day care centre which may be in their neighbourhood, or close to their parents' job, on the basis of the way in which the parent is funding that particular child is through a government-assisted programme? The answer is, no; they shouldn't.

And we actually see where a Minister has taken a bold step—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —to ensure that that does not continue. And that should be supported.

The points raised regarding unintended consequences are noted. We can always, if an issue is identified, come to this House and make the necessary amendments. But should we continue with the culture of discrimination in our community? No, we shouldn't. And we should be making progressive steps to move in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a society where a large portion of Bermudians already feel marginalised. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that we have a more inclusive society. I think the Minister has viewed this from the lens of looking at what other jurisdictions

have done. And we have actually followed with the model that is actually present in other jurisdictions. Because those legislators in those countries understood that it was a challenge [they] made the necessary corrective steps. And we're doing so as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Minister for bringing this Bill. We should continue to see our Human Rights Act evolve. These steps are part of that evolution. And we should do all that we possibly can to reduce discrimination in our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Is there any other Member . . . Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we point out that I think we are actually really close on our position of there shouldn't be discrimination. I agree with the Minister who just took his seat. I agree with almost everything that he said. The issue that we're trying to point out . . . and I think the Minister of Housing would agree with this [is that] there are a lot of issues in our community where people have stopped renting. And they have stopped renting for a lot of reasons. But one of them is that there is this perception that certain people are not paying. Whether it's realistic or not, because we're in such a small community, that's what continues to happen.

So, when we're talking about unintended consequences, what we don't want to have happen is for people to see that this is more risky for them to potentially find themselves being challenged because they made a certain decision. And now more people are deciding not to rent. And I think we do have an issue in Bermuda where people who have apartments in many cases have stopped renting them out. And in some cases, they've moved to Airbnb. And they are choosing it for all kinds of reasons why they are not renting to people. Which is making the housing crisis for us worse.

What we want . . . and I think sometimes when we get to our feet we are actually really close on a subject. But we are just on opposite sides on certain specific points. And what we don't want is for anybody to think that we are not supportive of making sure that we are protecting people and not having discrimination. But the reality is that people are already making these decisions for specific reasons.

We have heard in this Chamber recently that landlords are deciding not to rent to certain prison officers because they don't want to have any of the retaliation that potentially is going to happen because of the gang situation that we're having in our country.

And a lot of our seniors who do have rental units, that they do have the ability because they were able to get a home at some point in Bermuda when it was affordable, a lot of them are living off of those rents.

That's the reality that we have, because it's difficult to live in Bermuda because of the cost. So, for many of them, they have to make very specific decisions on who they rent to. Because, yes, we would love to think that every person who rents an apartment is going to treat that apartment a certain way. And they are going to pay the rent that is expected. And that's, I think, where we all sit.

What we don't want is for people to feel that if they have made a decision based off . . . and I'll point out . . . the Minister actually pointed out something that I thought was important. This is just him and me talking across the floor. And he said that an employer shouldn't discriminate against somebody who they're going to hire. But they also have the ability to choose who they can hire. Correct?

I don't think what we're saying is that this person is not going to have the ability to choose. But what now they're feeling is there is a risk that if they've made a choice for a legitimate reason it now opens this door for them to be put in hot water because we've added these other restrictions. Even if it's not true, it's the problem with the perception we have in the country. We don't want to have a situation where we are now having any of the landlords who are already renting starting to think this is just another reason why they shouldn't rent.

So that is the reason why we were saying if the Landlord Tenant Act was put forward with all of these provisions to make sure we're not discriminating at the same time, I think it would settle this rather than it be this piece has come forward and we haven't seen the Landlord Tenant Act, which we believe from what we've heard from the Minister is going to balance some of those issues that are causing people not to rent presently.

So, I want to make sure that we are not in a situation where people think that we are not in support of those people who need financial assistance. And the Minister pointed it out. A significant number of those are our seniors who find, in the market that we have now, it is very difficult to find affordable housing. We understand that this is a crisis that all of us want to get a result of.

What we do not want is that an unintended consequence of making this decision without having the provisions of a Landlord Tenant Act change could maybe have some more people decide not to put their houses on the market.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other?

Minister, would you like to take the floor? Oh, oh. Oh, sorry, Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

I do want to just quickly rise and provide a contribution and support for the Bill that is tabled, not only accepting its connectivity and ability to remove what this Government was both elected and it is expected of us to do, and that is to remove what are barriers to access. This administration would have campaigned on the Two Bermudas, and our inability or added ability through this legislation is only what is value-added in the context of a wider government strategy.

[That] is the strategy that includes the landlord and tenant reform, which we have spoken about in this House, and we have been thoughtful and consulted the various stakeholders and realtor community to ensure that when we do finalise what are the legislative amendments and the policy that would support and underpin its operations, it has been thoughtfully considered.

It is a journey, and it has taken some time. But what I also knew is that persons who are receiving financial assistance or are receiving government support are often looked at as problematic, or there will be a level of resistance to provide them services. In addition to the landlord and tenant provisions that the Ministry is thoughtfully stewarding, and the provisions included in this legislation that serve two but a connected purpose, it does not equate to actually an erosion and/or preclude us from evolving and moving forward.

And so, I celebrate the work of the Minister and her team to be able to rip down the barriers that create systematic access injustices. I often think of, and particularly today I'm rising on my feet because of a candidate's constituent's feedback about how a day care facility was not willing to accept their . . . uptick . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or what they had taken—application. (Thank you, Minister) The application, due to the fact that they were receiving government funding.

So, while the Government is seeking to do its part to provide access to provide relief for families to provide and remove the barriers and the Two Bermudas and to create greater connectivity and access, there are other things that could help to further strengthen and also establish a standard for which we in Bermuda are operating and can be known to be associated with.

When I see laws and when I am influenced by rules, rules also underpin a community's ethos. It's rules also define how we will and will not engage with one another. And I think that a provision that removes discrimination in the way that we engage with someone, engage, accept, et cetera, is good. And so, I do hear the Honourable Member's contribution today in providing resistance, but I think change is good.

And we are seeking to be laser-focused on how we want to provide for the people that we've been elected to serve. They have asked for us to remove these challenges. And so, in response to what they

would have shared with the Government, shared with the ministries, shared with the technical teams, where there are barriers to access, the answer must be we will find a way to remove those barriers. And so, I commend again, the Minister and the team to bring this thoughtful piece of legislation forward. And I just wanted to provide those brief contributions and support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Premier . . . Ah . . . Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'll attempt to be brief. And I actually appreciate all of the comments that have been made on this particular Bill that we are doing.

I believe that the sensitivity around this is important, that, yes, we move with some progressive thought in mind. There are always things to add to a Bill as we move through time. What we are attempting to do here is hoping that we can clear up some of the challenges and issues that are being brought forward so that it can be brought back before the House in September. Because we do agree on premise with this particular Bill. What we are concerned about is making sure that we don't miss anything out.

I do not believe, essentially, that a Landlord Tenant Bill will be brought to the House before September. We'll be on break, and we probably will only have two [sittings] in September. And so, we don't see any harm in the fact that, well, maybe we can clear out a few things, one or two items that will be important to everyone Island-wide, Bermuda-wide, just by rising to report [progress] and to bring it back, so that we've gotten that done.

I get the premise, *Okay, well, you know, we don't want to hold up because someone is complaining about it.* And people are complaining about the challenges of discrimination when it comes to the Landlord and Tenant Act. But what we are doing, frankly, is we haven't done much on the landlord tenant situation. And the landlords of Bermuda are speaking very loudly by not making their places available. So, let's get that in place.

And at the same time (get that in place) we can also, by September, get in place some of the concerns that we have. Hash those out, even during the time that we're out of session, so that when we come back in September, it's done. That's quick timing. But just to say that, okay, and the thought of progress, just to progress, we don't know when these issues will be handled. And quite frankly, sometimes amendments are

made quickly, and sometimes amendments take one or two years to come forward.

And so that's really just the premise that we're standing on, so that we are all clear on where we stand with this. And that landlords themselves . . . quite frankly, the majority of landlords are probably Black middle class in Bermuda. And probably the same for those who are on financial assistance are seniors. And so, we want to be fair to both, to ensure that . . . because I think one of the consequences is: *Well, they may not be renting it out.* But then the next challenge is they sell it. And sell it to who? The house. Because we're out of here. You know what I mean?

And that's something that we're sensitive to. And we are attempting to find a balance so that people are not basically saying: *Well, you know, what's the sense in owning a home in Bermuda when I have no say, quite frankly?* And now we're putting a further burden on the landlord, which happens to be us, right? So, I take it in . . . in . . . and we take it in stride as to what the Government wants to do. But that's really our concern.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Before I recognise anyone else, I just want to recognise the Attorney General in the Gallery, and Senator Fubler.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: And also see the President of the College, Dr. Sam. Nice to see you, Sam. Good to see you here. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

[Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, second reading debate, continuing]

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would. I would, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Sure.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Nice to be off the naughty step and back in the House.

The Speaker: It's a good place to be.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, it is.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to mention a few things in support of this Bill. Let me make it clear, the Landlord and Tenant Act, the Premier made it very clear during the last election that this was going to be one of the things that we deal with, and we will deal with as soon as possible. And I know that there is a lot of work [that has] been done in that space already, and it's well underway. And many Members, maybe on both sides, know that this is taking place. And so that will come.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to just emphasise that housing is a human right. And it should be emphasised as a human right. The Honourable Member who just took his seat, Mr. Cannonier, said that this is going to be a burden on the landlord. What about the burden on our people who are looking for housing and are being discriminated against?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What about that?

So, what I'm saying is, Mr. Speaker, is that—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Minister is unintentionally misleading the House. I did speak on behalf of both, that we want to be fair to both. My exact words were: We want to be balanced with both. Because we know the concern. It was not one-sided.

The Speaker: You did say balanced, yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, that's fine to say, you know, balanced. But right now, we have an imbalance. And it's not . . . The imbalance is not in favour of the landlord. The imbalance is in favour of the tenant, or that person who is looking for housing who is being discriminated against.

And whilst the Opposition may get on their feet and say: *Listen, it's only a couple of things. We can get it sorted out during the summer, and we'll deal with it in September*, in the meantime—and I know better than most—there are many people in this country who are not getting housing. And we all know in this House, there are many people who are not getting housing because people who own those apartments and houses will not rent to a certain segment. And every month that goes by another person is discriminated against. So, our view is that, listen: *Thank you, Minister, for being bold and bringing this forward today*. Because we're a couple of months closer to stopping discrimination.

So, Mr. Speaker, we must, in this House, always keep in mind that when we bring legislation here,

we won't always have everything covered 100 per cent. The fact of the matter is that we, as a Government, will bring things that will effect change for our people. Not saying that we are going to get it all correct and cover everything in one fell swoop. We won't. Neither will the other governments that come in years to come, maybe, if they get that luxury. But the fact of the matter is that we will make changes as quickly as we can. Sometimes we'll make changes that have to come back over and over. If you look at some of the legislation we have, if you look at the history of it, we've made a raft of changes throughout the decades. And we'll continue to do so.

And we may find from our own experiences that this legislation may need tweaking come forward sometime in the future because we are a caring Government and the people of this country know our record speaks for itself. The Premier gave us a nice 25-minute presentation this morning about what we're doing for the people of this country. This is another one of those.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we'll talk about that later.

The Speaker: Motion to adjourn.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we will talk about that later, Mr. Speaker. I hope that there will be more people that think of our seniors that way.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the Minister for bringing this. Do not be afraid to bring changes to this place that benefit our people. Never. If we have 100 items on the agenda and you can get 50 through, bring them here and pass them. We'll get the other 50 later.

So, thank you, Minister. Thank you. And the people of this country will appreciate you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just think that it's important to note that the Human Rights Commission, of course, is formed on a bipartisan basis. The recommendations on matters that are from here are coming from the Human Rights Commission, save and except for the items that are referring to discrimination [on] the source of funding

[from] government, which I think we should all accept is something that we can support. And so, I hope that we would recognise and remember and understand that we do have a process for these things. These are coming recommendations. We have an entire Act that governs how this process works. And I think it's important that those things are kept in mind, that it is not just a matter related to the Government.

The Ministers had the courage to bring these things and to make sure to do the work to address these things. But it's important to recognise there is a process. And I sincerely hope that the Opposition would understand, recognise, and understand that that is the process being followed. And we're trying to make sure we get these things right and proper because the recommendations are made, because the Human Rights Commission considers that there is a need to do these particular changes because of the complaints and challenges that are coming to them for the people whom we represent.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None?

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to start by thanking all of the Honourable Members in this House for their comments as it relates to the debate on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when bringing this Bill forward, we no doubt [thought] about everyday people. Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, there's a [letter to the editor](#) that I'd like to make reference to from a person who is an everyday person. And Mr. Speaker, that person says: "[And] landlords? They are free to discriminate without consequence. Tenants are rejected for having children, being unmarried, living with adult relatives, or simply not fitting a landlord's personal 'vibe.' Discrimination based on family structure, race, age, or gender is widespread." (And this person felt it was) "entirely unregulated. No one is checking. No one is enforcing."

Mr. Speaker, with this Bill, we are. And the Human Rights Bill in general, is to try to reduce discrimination overall. It's also to create access to people based on the grounds.

And I believe bringing this Bill today, Mr. Speaker, is a balanced approach. We have a housing crisis, Mr. Speaker. The section that we are [discussing] . . . one of the sections that we were looking to repeal, Mr. Speaker, speaks to discrimination on a particular type of accommodation. This actually, Mr. Speaker, was put in this Bill back in 1981. And we can all imagine what we were experiencing back in 1981. Racial tensions were ripe. And so, this insertion, I could

imagine, was there to try to discriminate against persons of colour.

Mr. Speaker, we are not there. We have grown, Mr. Speaker. We have grown. There have been many changes throughout the life of the Human Rights Act in which we are taking a policy stand to reduce discrimination. The Human Rights Commission does an excellent job of providing education in our community to anyone. Anyone who calls into the office for a complaint or an intake, it is the Human Rights Commission's role to provide information and to educate so that persons can go away and may have an informed decision. And we're thankful for the work that the Human Rights Commission does. That is one of their responsibilities. It is one of their duties, to educate the public as it relates to their rights, the discrimination rights.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak about financial assistance clients with the source of income and landlords potentially not accepting persons who benefit from financial assistance or the child day care allowance because they feel like they may not get paid, this is not a human rights issue. It's maybe an operation or process issue, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have to decide who we want to protect in this country. Granny, we want to protect Granny. Particularly the Granny who is on financial assistance and is in need of housing.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Every day I get calls from seniors—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Talk about it.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —saying they can't afford this amount and that amount. They are looking for somewhere to stay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Tinee. Give it to them. Give it to them.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But they are on financial assistance.

Hon. E. David Burt: Give it to them.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: My colleague to my side has already mentioned that the majority of persons who are on financial assistance are our grannies and grandpas, our older adults, our seniors. And so, we are hoping to provide a broader protection for them, particularly when it comes to housing.

¹ *The Royal Gazette*, 28 October 2025

When we talk about persons with criminal records, Mr. Speaker, there is a carve out in the Human Rights Act that speaks to persons with criminal records being a protected ground. Where there is an exception, particularly for those persons in which there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which that person is convicted, that would justify a difference in treatment. And so that is already a carve out in the Human Rights Act. That if someone came to the Human Rights Office that there is still some protection for our landlords, for our businessowners who have goods and services that will give the human rights direction on how they should proceed.

The Human Rights Commission has also stated that they will write guidelines as it relates to family status, discrimination by association, which will help to guide the tribunals or their decisions going forward. I think that's fair, Mr. Speaker. To insert a specific definition into the Human Rights Act would be a limiting approach. And we need to be able to give leverage because there are so many different circumstances. We'll be changing it every year, every six months. And so, the Human Rights Commission has committed to making sure that these guidelines are in place. And I'm sure if the public is listening, if there is something that they want for consideration, the Human Rights is that body to which they can write and have consideration.

Mr. Speaker, persons purchase properties for many reasons. For those who have apartments, they do for family members. They'll have apartments for investment reasons. Our seniors, who are actually the majority of persons who actually own their own homes, also do it for income so that they can have income when they no longer are working or they're retired. But people may stop renting their apartments for many reasons. Many reasons, because maybe previous persons in their apartments destroyed their property, or they stopped paying rent and they are in arrears, or they just don't need the money. So, there are many different factors separate and apart from the protected grounds of why someone would choose to not rent their apartment.

And we'll follow this, Mr. Speaker. We'll follow this. The Minister of Human Affairs, and other Members in this House, spoke about how we are progressing the Landlord and Tenant Act, which will give us greater provision to follow these sorts of circumstances.

We're taking a stand today, Mr. Speaker. Housing is a human right. Our people have called for changes, for direction, and we want to limit the erosion of our right to housing so that our persons can have better access to the things that they need.

And I will end on that point, Mr. Speaker. Discrimination in all forms, Mr. Speaker, is just unlawful. And we are taking steps today, which I spoke about in my brief, that this is a phased approach because more changes will be coming. This is just a few of them, particularly to make sure that we are helping our people as we go through this housing crisis to provide some better protection for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.
Would you like to . . . oh.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: We are moving the motion.

Mr. Scott Pearman: We're going to Committee?

The Speaker: Yes, we're going to Committee. You can move the motion—

Mr. Scott Pearman: And we'll move motion, yes.

The Speaker: Yes.
You need to move us into Committee, Minister.
Move us to Committee. Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Any . . . you would like us to, you want to . . .

Mr. Scott Pearman: Move a motion that we rise and report.

The Speaker: Yes, but before—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: We haven't even got into Committee yet. We're moving the motion at this point.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Yes, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, we can.

The Speaker: Wait, wait. Wait, wait.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Yes, yes. What I was about to say is are there any objections to going into Committee?

You can object to, but if you want to move the motion, you should move your motion when we get into Committee.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Fine.

The Speaker: Okay?

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's fine.

The Speaker: Okay. So, we'll move . . . we are moving it to Committee. The . . . Deputy?

Okay. And in Committee, you can put forward your amendment, the motion, whichever you wish.
Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 4:23 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Human Rights Amendment Act 2026](#). I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Human Rights Act of 1981, the principal Act, on the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission.

The Chairman: Minister, would you like to move that we take this under consideration now? And you might want to indicate which clauses, if you want to do them in sections, or if you want to do all the clauses.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, thank you. I would like to move clauses 1 through 6.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 through 6, inclusively.

Are there any objections?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Chairman, we move . . . I'll spare your voice on this one if people are with us, but we move that we rise and report [progress] on this Bill.

The Chairman: Members, it has been moved and suggested that we rise and report progress.

Are there any objections?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

The Chairman: I think . . . it doesn't have to go to—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Yes.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: This . . . that motion did not carry, so we will continue.

It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 through 6. Are there any Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I'm conscious that we have lots to do today and this evening, so shall I put all four questions that I have all at once, yes?

The Chairman: You may, because we're considering all six clauses.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Perfect. Thank you so much.

So, my first question to the Honourable Minister is—

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order.

The Chairman: Sure. Minister, go ahead. Your point of order.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Should the Minister not go through the clauses first?

The Chairman: Oh, yes. Yes, you are 100 per cent correct, Minister, . . . and that is . . . the Minister needs to read all six clauses. Thank you.

I think the Minister was hoping that she could get by not doing—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Trying to save my voice, trying to save your voice.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1, Madam Chairman, gives the title.

Clause 2 amends section 2(1) of the principal Act (interpretation). The definition of "class of persons" is extended to include persons with a criminal record. "Government funding" is defined to mean the specified financial assistance awards or child day care allowance. Receipt of government funding is inserted as an additional prohibited ground of discrimination in sections 4 and 5.

Clause 3 inserts new section 2A into the principal Act (discrimination by association). Subsection (1) prohibits discrimination against a person because of a protected characteristic relating to a person or class of persons associated with that person. Subsection (2) defines "protected characteristic" as meaning the criteria listed in section 2(2)(a)(i) to (vii). And in relation to discrimination prescribed by section 4 or 5, includes age or receipt of government funding.

Clause 4, Madam Chairman, amends section 4(1) of the principal Act (discrimination in disposal of premises) to include receipt of government funding as

a prohibited ground of discrimination for this section. The deletion of subsection (4)(a) removes an exception from discrimination that currently applies in the case of the letting of a housing unit in a building which contains accommodation for two or three families living independently if the owner or members of his family occupy one of the units.

Clause 5 amends section [5](1) of the principal Act (provision of goods, facilities and services) to include receipt of government funding as a prohibited ground of discrimination for this section. New subsection (6) provides that requiring a level of income to qualify for the provision of a facility for banking, insurance, grants, loans, credit or finance which is not satisfied by a person who is in receipt of government [funding] is not taken to be discriminatory.

Clause 6 provides for commencement.

Madam Chairman, I would like to move all clauses, 1 through 6, to be approved.

The Chairman: To be considered. Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: To be considered.

The Chairman: Yes.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much and per your prior indication I'll move all four questions at the same time for the benefit of the Minister and your voice.

Two of these questions have been shared with the Minister in advance. They're technical questions on the drafting, and then two are general questions.

The first question is in relation to clause 2 which amends section 2 of the primary Act and it's in relation to [section] 2[(1)](a) in the definition of "class of persons" delete "sub-paragraphs (i) to (vi)" and substitute "sub-paragraphs (i) to (vii)". And the question is . . . and (vii) by the way, for the benefit of the listening public, is the section that makes criminal record a discriminatory characteristic or a protected characteristic rather. Just . . . could the Minister clarify whether this is just a typographical correction or whether there is an underlying reason why that is being put into the definition of "class of persons"? So that's the first question.

The second question of four relates to clause 3, down to the bottom of page 1. This was something actually the Minister dealt with in her response. But it's: Is there in fact a definition of "discrimination by association"? I think the Minister said no there is not, and you didn't want one. But it may be that it's clarified.

My third question is over the page and that is in relation to . . . well, it's still in clause 3, but it's the second page that deals with clause 3. And that is the fact that age is now being inserted into discrimination by association. And I just invite the Minister to give a practical example of how that's going to work. How is

age in the context of discrimination by association going to work?

And then finally and lastly, my fourth question is in relation to receipt of government funding, which is clause 3, inserting a new 2A. And it's 2A(2)(b) where the receipt of government funding is now being inserted as a new language.

The Minister spoke in the debate and indeed commended the fact that where a criminal record is provided as a discriminatory protected characteristic there is in fact a caveat that follows. And the Minister referred to it in her in her brief, which says, *except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he's convicted that would justify the difference in treatment*. That phraseology is what's known as a justification defence. It means someone accused of discrimination can justify why they acted as they did.

I would simply add, would the Minister perhaps take under advisement whether it would be sensible to add a justification defence to receipt of government funding? One could envisage a situation where a nice landlord gives a premises to someone on government funding. But subsequently, a month or two or three or even a year and a half later, is not paid, terminates that lease, and then is accused of discrimination in circumstances where that landlord actually tried to do the honourable thing. Should that landlord not have a legitimate defence, where they can justify their actions for other reasons be a good inclusion? And it's in relation to something that already exists in the law for criminal record. Why not add it in in the Senate for government funding? Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, as previously mentioned, the right to housing has been codified by a wide range of international legal instruments under the umbrella of the United Nations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] reported that 1.8 billion people worldwide lacked adequate housing. And discrimination in housing is one of the most pervasive and persistent barriers to fulfilment of the right to adequate housing. The exception set out within section 4(4)(a) of the Human Rights Act [1981] is frustrating the right to adequate housing at a time where members of our community are experiencing difficulties securing housing, periods of being unhoused, or periods of being inadequately housed. Discrimination based on association with a person because of that person's age in the same way it would be because of that person's

race, sex or religion. There's no difference in the ground, Madam Chairman.

As it relates to discrimination by association, with the policy in the addition of criminal record, criminal record has been a ground in the Human Rights Act for a number of years now. But discrimination of a person with a criminal record should be included in the amendment as unlawful. Previously it was stated in the Human Rights Act [1981] [in] section 2(2)(a) . . . it had only gone up to (i) to (vi) [*sic*] and Council had advised that that needed to be changed to include the grounds of (vii).

I do want to take the opportunity to speak of some examples of discrimination by association:

- An individual who worked at a restaurant and was terminated when their employer and customers learned that their boyfriend was HIV positive.
- An individual who was expelled from a membership club for speaking out internally against racism that they observed within the organisation. They were expelled and discriminated against because they associated themselves with individuals subjected to racism who were Aboriginal and Black.
- A situation where a restaurant harassed and refused to serve an Asian customer because they are accompanied by someone who is Black. Or refusing to provide a service to someone who is White because they have attended with someone who is Black (or you can use age in that example).
- Another scenario could be someone who is denied an employment opportunity because of the political opinions of an individual with which they associate, for example, a friend.

Madam Chairman, I do want to speak to the drafting process in the Attorney General's Chambers which includes an analysis, Madam Chairman, of all the pieces of legislation as it relates to the Human Rights Act and its impact, and whether there are contemplated changes, or adequately dealt with, or conflicting with other pieces of legislation. And that was definitely done.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you.

I think the Honourable Minister addressed my first three questions, but not the fourth one, which is whether or not the Minister considers the justification defence would be appropriate in relation to receipt of government funding. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I don't . . . I'm not understanding the question. If you can be a little bit more—

The Chairman: Sure.

Member, can you rephrase the question, please?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Of course. Of course, Madam Chairman. Of course, Minister.

The question was that the Minister in her brief had referred to the Human Rights Act and to the fact that someone who has a protected characteristic of being . . . of having a criminal record, that there was a defence available in a discrimination claim, which says, except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he's convicted that would justify the difference in treatment.

Just to give a practical example of that: If you're a convicted child sex offender and you apply to work at a nursery school, and the nursery school says: *Over my dead body*. You can't sue the nursery school for discrimination. So, that's why those defences exist.

The Chairman: Right.

Mr. Scott Pearman: They are sort of, you know, practical defences.

And the question I posed to the Minister was, given her commendation in relation to that clause and how it works (and she used it in the example of housing), would the Minister consider it sensible to include that with the receipt of finances?

And the example I gave there was someone who was initially given a tenancy but then stopped paying. And if they sue for discrimination because they've stopped paying, and that's why it comes to an end, you know, would the Minister consider a justification defence? Thank you.

[*Inaudible interjections*]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for those questions.

The Bill, Madam Chairman, only speaks to receipt of government funding. Right? Receipt. So, if I . . . if I am going to rent a place and I say that I'm a recipient of financial assistance, that's what it speaks to. Receipts.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: As far as defence or putting a qualifier or defence into the Act, the example that was given was in regard to sexual offenders. There are

protections that we have in other legislation that will protect an employer from hiring persons with certain criminal activity or past. Such as, I believe, the Child Day Care Regulations, you know, and also there's legislation within the Children Act that says that anyone who is going to work for a child day care facility has to have a criminal record check, as well as a check for child abuse. So, there are checks and balances throughout different legislation that we don't feel the need that we would have to put a defence clause in the Human Rights Act.

But I just wanted to clarify that the Act, as it relates to government funding, is just that of receipt of government funding.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 17. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Yes. I just want to highlight the instance that the Honourable Member brought to the floor with this scenario regarding an individual who may be on financial assistance who has gained access to a house and then is later, due to lack of payment, asked . . . or to be . . . or the process starts for eviction. But that would be based off of breach of contract and/or breach of the lease. The inability to pay the lease. It has nothing to do with the discriminatory grounds. And so the contract still remains and the tenant still needs to live up to the expectations of the lease or the contract that they engaged in with the landowner.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry. I was going to leave it there but let me just give a practical example.

So, the landlord takes on board someone on financial assistance as a tenant because he is a good landlord and is someone who believes in helping people who are on financial assistance. Nonetheless . . . and let's call it a one-year lease. Because leases don't often, you know, it could be a three-month lease, break clause. It could be six months; it could be a year. But let's call it a year for example. If after three months or even five months there's no payment being made, the landlord might say: *Well, I'm actually terminating this person because they're not paying me.* But the discrimination as drafted doesn't afford the same reasonable defence that is afforded in the sex offender list . . . or the sex . . . the criminal records bit that I read.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, I'll put it . . . Well, I'm sorry. I'll put it one more time because obviously we're at cross purposes.

Underneath the Human Rights Act there is what is known as a defence. It's a defence that's available to people accused of discrimination . . . for discriminating against those with criminal records. And I read the defence, but I'll read it one more time for completeness.

So, you cannot discriminate against someone with their criminal record. And then there's a defence, (*comma*) ²“except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he is convicted that it would justify the difference in treatment.”

An example I gave was of a child sex offender trying to work at a nursery school. And we all, I think, agree that that's a pretty good example. And that's why you have a defence.

Your Bill has no defence in relation to the person on receipt of government funds. And I'm just asking the Minister whether she thinks that perhaps there should be.

And I was trying to give an example of someone . . . where someone, under the kindness of their heart, took on someone into a tenancy, because they are a good person. But nonetheless the person on financial aid fell short on the payments. And if they terminated at that point, and they're accused of discrimination, the legislation that is drafted doesn't appear to offer them a defence. And maybe we should. That's my point.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, if rent isn't paid then termination of tenancy is not on a discriminatory ground.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Okay. Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6:

There being none, Minister, you can move . . . you can move your . . .

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would like to move all clauses, 1 through 6—

The Chairman: Approved.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —to be approved.

² Human Rights Act 1981, section 2(2)(a)(vii)

The Chairman: Okay.

It's been moved that clauses 1 through 6 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 6 passed.]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections?

An Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 4:47 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

Are there any objections?

No objections.

Okay. The Bill has reported to the House as printed.

We will now move on to the next item, [Order] No. 3, which is the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister, the Premier, the Minister of Finance.

Premier. Thank you, sir.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I move that the Bill entitled the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a second time?

There are none.

Proceed

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

BILL

SECOND READING

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government to rise this morning . . . I'm sorry, this afternoon—

The Speaker: This afternoon. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —to address this Honourable House and debate the Bill entitled the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes amendments to the Tax Credits Act 2025 to provide for the better administration [of] tax credits regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax credit claims. The Government finds there is a need to ensure that the administration of the tax credits regime operates within well-defined rules, criteria, and transparency.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, the Tax Credits Act has been in force since December 2025, with effect from 1 December 2025. The Tax Credits Act establishes several qualified tax credits: a substance-based tax credit, a community development tax credit benefit, and a utilities infrastructure tax credit benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the Tax Credits Act provides tax credits to incentivise industries that are instrumental in the growth and development of the Bermuda economy to invest in their on-Island operations to encourage such investment that results in increased employment in Bermuda and increased job opportunities for Bermudians, to further encourage such investment where it results in increased expenditure on domestic goods and services thereby benefiting the wider local Bermuda economy. And lastly, to recognise and encourage charitable contributions, whereas the charitable contributions represent a meaningful contribution to the community.

Mr. Speaker, the Corporate Income Tax Agency held a public consultation of the proposed amendments to the Act in June 2026 which included an illustrative Bill. The feedback received during the consultation process has been thoroughly reviewed and thoughtfully considered and, where appropriate, revisions have been incorporated into legislation to

address the concerns and suggestions raised by stakeholders. This approach ensures the legislation is both practical in its application and reflective of the input of those whom it will affect.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments relate the following matters and are put forward for consideration:

- to provide a more accurate calculation number of eligible employees in regard for the calculation of tax credit benefits awarded under the substance-based tax credit;
- to provide greater clarity in the calculation of expense-based tax credit benefits; and
- to reduce administrative complexity where there are changes in a corporate group to ensure such changes do not impact the calculation of a group's tax credit benefits.

Mr. Speaker, further to these changes, consequential amendments are proposed the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 to ensure the legislation remains in line with the updated tax credit framework. The consequential amendment reflects the ordering of tax credit payments from the tax refund reserve fund before the consolidated fund for all tax credit recipients and not just recipients who are in the charge to corporate income tax.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I wish to emphasise that the Government remains confident that Bermuda's corporate tax framework upholds Bermuda's strong commitment to global compliance and transparency while maintaining the Island's respected reputation internationally. The progress achieved thus far was made possible through the invaluable contributions of the international tax working group, whose expertise and dedication continue to play a central role in advancing this important initiative.

I would also like to thank everyone in the Ministry of Finance and the Corporate Income Tax Agency, as we're joined by the CEO, along with our dedicated advisors for the time, effort and expertise they've contributed to this work. I also extend my appreciation to the drafting team of the Attorney General's Chambers for their support throughout this process.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my comments and I sincerely hope that the Opposition will respond with "I support" and no buts.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Premier forgets that I don't actually sit in his Cabinet, so, you know—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, he may have to . . . I know he's used to bossing people around. But he's just going

to get used to . . . we're going to say what we're going to say and he's going to have his way. And if it's—

An Hon. Member: You sound like you are trying to invite yourself into.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of bipartisanship, if a hand was reached out, you know, we would carefully consider if it was in the best interest of Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Always the best interests of Bermuda!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: As I mentioned earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we are . . . you know, we had reviewed this. We had reviewed the consultation, and we also thanked the FS for reaching out to see if we had any concerns or discussions in the briefing. So, we have had a chance to review and are generally . . . not generally, we obviously support this stuff. We support this specific amendment.

We notice it unties the hands of CITA on how it deals with certain situations, which I think is good. It gives them a little more flexibility, and it allows them to perhaps be a little more commercial and efficient. We know that these things are very complex and very detailed. And it's natural that as time goes on certain corner cases and stuff get figured out and then can be corrected. So, we are glad to see that.

We're certainly grateful to the team at the Ministry and at the Agency because this stuff is very detailed, very granular. And so, we have confidence in what they are doing there. And we are happy to support this Bill because we know that the Government will not survive without this corporate income tax income. And the tax credits is a major part of allowing Bermuda to remain a—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —to remain a—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and the tax credits are an important part of Bermuda remaining an important jurisdiction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I did have one . . . I did have one reservation. You know I have a lot of concerns about how some companies are receiving tax credits while not paying the corporate income tax. And we've talked about the insurance company that is receiving

\$20 million of tax credit and is turning that around and will be providing \$20 million to its shareholders through buybacks.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I am, to be frank, a little disappointed that we're not seeing any movement there. So, you know, I would say I had hopes to see it here, but I know that the consultation for this has happened, started quite a long time ago. So that wasn't realistic. But I still hold out high hopes for perhaps another tax credits amendment Bill this session that may address some of these issues or perhaps legislation for domestic insurers that will address some of those issues.

But for this amendment, Mr. Speaker, we are fully in support. So, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much. I am grateful for the support of the Opposition. I move the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Madam [Deputy Speaker].

[Crosstalk]

House in Committee at 4:56 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

HOUSE VISITOR

The Chairman: Members, before we began, I would like to recognise in the Gallery Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Welcome.

[Desk thumping]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Minister, we are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister, Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Your own St. George's people coming after you. See! You need help.

Anyhow, Madam Chairman, if I may, I would like to move clauses, all the clauses 1 through 16.

The Chairman: it has been moved that we consider all clauses, 1 through 16.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 16 to provide for a more accurate calculation of the number of eligible employees, which in turn affects the calculation of the level of tax credit benefits awarded under the substance-based tax credit.

Clause 3 amends section 17 to update a cross reference.

Clause 4 amends section 18 to provide for adjustments to the calculation of the number of eligible employees due to corporate transactions when an employer company joins or leaves a group.

Clause 5 amends section 20 to provide for greater clarity in the calculation of expense-based tax credit benefits in "stub" periods that are less than 12 months.

Clause 6 repeals and inserts new subsections in section 22 to correct instances where a fiscal year was broken up into periods (for example, due to a corporate transaction) which could lead to inaccuracies in calculation of how tax credit benefits were apportioned over multiple fiscal years.

Clause 7 amends section 23 to take account of changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 8 amends section 24 to address potential inaccuracies that could arise when a "stub period" used in calculating tax credit benefits did not coincide with the same period used in calculating a corporate income tax charge.

Clause 9 amends section 25 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 10 amends section 26 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 11 amends section 27 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 12 [repeals] and substitutes section 33 to reduce administrative complexity where there are changes in a corporate group and the changes do not impact the calculation of a group's tax credit.

Clause 13 amends section 35 to provide that the accrual of tax credit benefits against designated tax refund reserve fund shall occur for all tax credit recipients (and not just recipients who are within the charge to corporate income tax).

Clause 14 amends section 37 to correct references to the tax credit claim form.

Clause 15 repeals and substitutes section 39 to clarify how interest on amounts that are paid out due to overstatement is calculated.

Clause 16 provides for a consequential amendment to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 to reflect the impact of the amendment to section 35 under clause 12.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 16?

There are no other persons.
Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, don't the decorations on my desk in the House look absolutely lovely?

The Chairman: No.

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm sorry.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: It matches with my tie, it's like—

The Chairman: It does match your tie, but I do see a St. George's flag there, which is beautiful. It's beautiful.

Hon. E. David Burt: Your vision is like your voice right now. Anyhow . . .

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 16 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 16 be approved.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 16 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, thank you.
I move the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It's been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 5:00 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 being reported to House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

That now moves us on to the next item on the Order Paper. That item is the second reading of the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026. Hereinafter, I'll refer to it as the 2026 Amendment Act.

This Bill is a technical and housekeeping measure. It makes consequential amendments arising from the Bermuda Health Council Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 to ensure that the legislative framework remains clear, consistent, and free from unnecessary duplication. The Bill does not introduce new policy or substantive regulatory requirements. Rather, it refines the existing legislative framework by removing duplicate provisions and improving the cohesiveness of the legislation.

The 2024 Amendment Act was introduced in response to long-standing concerns regarding the operation of health service providers without an appropriate regulatory framework, together with inadequate oversight and maintenance requirements for high-risk health technology. Prior to the enactment of the 2024 Act, the regulation of health service providers was fragmented across several pieces of legislation. Pharmacies were regulated under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979, while hospitals, clinical laboratories, and diagnostic imaging facilities were regulated under the Public Health Act 1949.

Similarly, regulation of high-[risk] health technology was primarily limited to equipment falling within the scope of the Radiation Act 1972. While these Acts established important regulatory controls within their respective areas, they did not provide a comprehensive or consistent framework for regulating health service providers and high-risk health technology. This resulted in gaps in regulatory oversight, limitations in enforcement, and inconsistencies between legislative intent and operational practice.

Mr. Speaker, the 2024 Amendment Act addressed these shortcomings by establishing a modern regulatory framework for health service providers and high-risk health technology, founded on the principles of safety, quality, and sustainability in the delivery of health services. Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Health Council Amendment (No. 2) Act introduced a new regulatory regime for health service providers and high-risk health technology.

As a consequence of those reforms, certain existing provisions now overlap or duplicate the new regulatory framework. Mr. Speaker, this Bill completes the consequential legislative amendments that were required to remove those duplicate provisions, clarify the operation of the legislative framework, and ensure that the regulatory responsibilities of the Bermuda Health Council, health service providers, and owners and operators of high-risk health technology are set out in a clear, consistent, and coherent manner.

The amendments are technical and consequential in nature. They are intended to improve legislative clarity, reduce unnecessary administrative duplication, and support the efficient administration of the regulatory regime while maintaining the existing standards of regulatory oversight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister.

As the Minister rightly said to this Honourable House, this Bill is a tidying-up Bill. What it is effectively doing is taking three old bits of legislation and taking

out certain powers as exercised under those three old bits of legislation. They are the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979, the Public Health Act 1949, and the Radiation Act 1972, and then rehousing those within the context of the principal Act, which is the [Bermuda] Health Council Act 2004. And that is my understanding of this Bill, and if I have that wrong, then I invite the Honourable Minister to correct that.

I do have two further quick points for the Minister, and if they can be addressed then perhaps we could avoid any Committee. One is . . . I think there may be a typo at page 2 of the Bill, under clause 1, subsection (2), where it says: "Section 2 of the Act is—

The Speaker: You should actually leave that for the Committee. That is part of the Committee business. [IN-AUDIBLE]

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: All right. I was just going to flag it now. But okay. I'll wait. Okay. Fine.

The Speaker: It is Committee business.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Fine. No problem.

Then the only non-typo question is this: Is the Minister comfortable that all of the powers that are now being repealed and revoked in the old legislation are in fact moving across and well-housed in the new legislation?

I ask because I remember one of my first outings in this Honourable House was when we rehoused everything but we forgot some bits, and we had to come back and fix it. But if the Minister is comfortable, I'm grateful.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

None?

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Honourable and Learned friend for his question. We are comfortable. This, unfortunately, is a consequential amendment of tidying up. It was something that was picked up by the drafter, and we immediately moved to address that. So yes, we are comfortable in that regard.

And I'm looking for the typo, but I'll wait until we get into Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 5:04 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL
(MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026**

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Bermuda Health Council \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister in charge.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
I'd like to move all three clauses, please. Four clauses.

The Chairman: It has been proposed that we consider all four clauses.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 gives effect to Schedule 1 which repeals the powers of the Minister of Health to (a) register and regulate pharmacies under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979; (b) register and regulate clinical laboratories, diagnostic facilities, and hospitals under the Public Health Act 1949; and [(c)] licence those substances and apparatus under the Radiation Act 1972 which fall within the definition of high-risk [health] technology.

Madam Chairman, with your leave, I did move all four clauses but there is . . . a typo that the Honourable and Learned Member has picked up—

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —which is actually in clause 1. Should we address that now before I move to the other clauses?

The Chairman: Yes, we can. Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chairman: You could just go ahead and address it.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay.
MP Pearman, shall I raise it?

[No audible response]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Thank you.
Madam Chairman, and I think this can be adequately addressed under the slip rule.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: [Schedule 1] clause 1 [subsection] (2), at the end. It says: "Section 2 of the Act is amended in the definition of 'Registrar' by repealing paragraph . . ." And it should say "three four" *[sic]* and there is a "(b)." So, if we can just make that amendment under the slip rule before this is actually sent to the Senate.

The Chairman: Yes. Yes, this is a simple amendment so we can just do it now.

Are there any persons against that amendment being made?

There are none, so.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thanks, Madam Chairman.

Clause 3 gives effect to Schedule 2 which (a) amends section 2 of the Bermuda Health Council Act 2004 by amending the definition of "health services" to add the word "pharmacy" and section 15A to provide for the Bermuda Health Council to publish a notice of the names of institutions [or] bodies approved by the Council.

Clause 4 provides for this Act to come into operation on such day as the Minister of Health appoints by notice published in the *Gazette*.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It was moved that the preamble be approved.

Any objections?

There are none.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House—

The Chairman: Schedule. Schedule. Schedule. Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. Thank you.
I move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

Any objections?
There are none.

[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House . . . as amended.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. No, it's not an amendment.

The Chairman: It's not really; it's just a typo correction.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. So, it would be as printed. Yes.

The Chairman: Okay.

It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed. Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Chairman: Any objections?
No.
So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 5:08 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed by the typo that was corrected?
There are no objections. Good.

We'll now move on to [Order] No. 5, which is consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27. And again, in the name of the Finance Minister and Premier.
Premier, you have the floor.

BILL

SECOND READING

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you won't be here long, clearly,—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —because in accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5) I move that the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of the whole [House] to consider said estimates.

The Speaker: Ah! Premier, I'm pleased to hear that.
Any objections to that?

Deputy [Speaker], it looks like you're back in the Chair for a while.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 5:09 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of Supply on [Supplementary Estimate \(No. 1\) for financial year 2026/27](#).
Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much. I'll press ahead.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman, I will give an introduction for the Committee of Supply on the Supplementary Estimate. Then, of course, each Minister will move their individual heads as printed.

Madam Chairman, the Schedule identifies five items totalling \$22,263,245 made up of \$4,763,245 on

current account and \$17,500,000 on capital account, the total Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27. Of this, \$2.5 million pertains to recent prison review report recommendations for both operational and capital requirements, \$3.3 million of additional grant funding to Bermuda College to support operational strategic requirements, \$15.2 million for recent approval to purchase Compass Point to support the government office accommodation needs, and \$1.3 million to support government-wide IT upgrades.

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 is anticipated to be a technical supplementary. As the Ministry of Finance continues to strengthen its monitoring control of all government expenditure, a technical supplementary indicates the requirement for additional funding can be met within the original appropriate estimates inclusive of prior approved supplementary estimates. However, it cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry and/or capital account.

In respect to the three capital projects taken from existing capital projects . . . have been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to establish a revised total authorised figure. Honourable Members will recall the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates require all items on current account to be debated if the total current account spend of the Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate. All capital items are debatable.

Applying the criteria that I just described, the two current account items are debatable, and I would therefore move that the Committee of the Whole [House] do take under consideration current account items 1 and 2, and capital account items 3 through 5.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

We are in Committee of Supply, and at this point, we will be considering Head 25, I believe it is.

I call on the respective Minister, Junior Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

HOUSE VISITOR

The Chairman: While the Junior Minister is getting ready, I just want to acknowledge the Attorney General, Senator Kim Wilson, *[sic]* Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: Wilkerson.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Wilkerson, sorry. Yes.
Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good afternoon, Madam Chairman, and good afternoon to the listening audience.

Madam Chairman, Department of Corrections Supplemental for 2026/27. In the 2026/27 fiscal year, Honourable Members were asked to—

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 1, Head 24—

The Chairman: Head 25.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Head 25. (I have the wrong one.)
[Head 25] be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Head 25 be now taken under consideration.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE—HEAD 25

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

In 2026/27 fiscal year, Honourable Members were asked to approve a supplementary estimate to support the Department of Corrections in carrying out initiatives arising from the recommendations of the Overseas Territories Inspection Report. The initiatives represent critical interventions required to address key risks and deficiencies—

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Just one moment, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

An Hon. Member: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Can you please remind when individuals who are coming in to support Ministers into this House, they should be acknowledged when they enter the House, and they should at least wait for you to let them into the House, and then they're allowed to sit in the Gallery or in the area to support the Minister. Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you, Member.

I think you've clarified what had to happen, so I hope that the person does recognise that rule that we have in the House.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I'll continue, Madam Chairman.

The initiatives represent critical interventions required to address key risks and deficiencies identified in the report at a total cost of \$2,463,245. This request was driven by urgent operational needs and by the Government's broader commitment to strengthening rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, and promoting safer communities through restorative justice.

Madam Chairman, as the final recommendations of the Inspection Report were not received during the budget preparation and submission period, the costs associated with these initiatives were not included in the department's 2026/27 budget submission. In keeping with responsible fiscal management, the Ministry of Justice undertook a detailed review to identify possible savings environments within its existing allocation. That review confirmed that no internal resources were available to meet the department's statutory and operational obligations without compromising other essential services. Accordingly, in July 2026, a supplementary allocation of \$2,463,245 was approved to support the implementation of the initiatives.

Madam Chairman, a key component of this supplementary allocation is funding for four full-time instructors at a cost of \$617,850. The department is heavily reliant on vendors and volunteers to deliver rehabilitative services and programmes.

While these partnerships remain valuable, the availability of providers and scope of contracted services can fluctuate, creating challenges in maintaining consistent programme delivery. The addition of full-time instructors will significantly enhance the continuity and reliability of rehabilitative services, ensuring that individuals in our care have regular access to education, vocational, and life skills interventions that support positive change and reintegration into society.

Madam Chairman, the supplementary allocation also provides funding for full-time maintenance staff at a cost of \$357,000. The consistent maintenance of the department's facilities is essential to ensuring a safe, secure, and humane environment for both staff and inmates. A dedicated team of five maintenance staff will allow the department to address repairs and infrastructure issues in a more timely and proactive manner, reduce reliance on external contractors for routine work, and support compliance with recommended operational and institutional standards identified through the inspection process.

Madam Chairman, the supplementary allocation provides funding for staff training at a cost of \$50,000. Enhanced staff training will be a fundamental requirement to support the reform initiatives and address operational challenges. This initiative is essential to support both immediate operational effectiveness and long-term reform goals. In addition to operational initiatives, policy and legislative modernisation is required to align operations with the recommendations from the report.

The supplementary allocation provides funding for service providers to provide delivery of policy review and modernisation of legislation and project management at a cost of \$338,395.

Madam Chairman, financial support for Astor House directly advances the mandate of the Department of Corrections. As a supervised transitional housing facility for released inmates, Astor House will play a critical role in supporting successful integration into the community. Evidence has shown that structured transitional housing and supervision following release contribute to reduce recidivism and improve public safety. Accordingly, the supplementary allocation of \$100,000 will enable Astor House to provide supervised transitional housing for selected released inmates who are on parole. It will assist parolees in making a successful transition back into society while remaining under appropriate supervision.

Lastly, Madam Chairman, facility conditions including improved ventilation were highlighted as a key concern in the review report. Ageing infrastructure and deferred maintenance have contributed to operational deficiencies and deterioration of living working conditions. Facility upgrades also include improvements to vocational workshops so they can be better utilised for vocational classes. Improved ventilation and critical upgrades are essential for compliance to health and safety standards and to provide humane conditions for inmates and staff.

Madam Chairman, this supplemental funding reflects the Government's commitment to strengthening the correctional system through sustainable operational improvements, enhanced rehabilitation services, and the provision of safe and secure facilities. Together, these measures will support better outcomes for those in our care, improve working conditions for our officers and staff, and contribute to a more effective and resilient correction system in our Justice system.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I thank the Junior Minister for his fulsome explanation of the supplementary estimate for Corrections.

I also want to take note as well that I've had communication with the Permanent Secretary, Mr. David Roberts, who's been most helpful with the discussion that we've had about how we can work together to make sure that the Department of Corrections and the Ministry achieve its objectives.

Regarding the supplementary estimate, I just want a bit of detail, so the questions are going to be . . . reference that. In terms of the rationale for it, given the recommendations of the report, it makes absolute

sense and we're all in agreement with that. The POA has said it, the service providers, so we're all in agreement.

Regarding the four full-time instructors, can you give us the breakdown in terms of are those for vocational programmes and/or rehabilitation programmes and what the breakdown is for that?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Did you want to ask all your questions first?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: You put all your questions first. Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the identified programmes, both vocational, educational and rehabilitative, what specific programmes and when will they start to be delivered?

Regarding the maintenance positions, there are going to be five new persons and, if my understanding is correct, they are going to be for all facilities, and this is going to be part of an ongoing maintenance and repair programme.

Regarding the staff training, what type of specific training is the staff going to receive? And regarding staff training, do we have a full complement of Correctional officers to meet the needs of the facilities?

Regarding the vocational workshop being fitted out for purpose, has the supplementary estimate taken into consideration the repairs for those buildings, the cost of instructors and fully fitting them out with the necessary equipment and materials necessary to ensure the programme's success?

Those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There being none . . . Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Can I just ask, Madam Chairman, if the Member can repeat one of his questions?

The Chairman: Certainly.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I have it down as the second set that you asked. You had asked [about] the maintenance staff and then it was a question after that. I think I overlooked it.

Mr. Robert King: The question after that was regarding staff training, specifically about what type of training, and was that also related to new Correctional officers that are going to be coming on board? Thanks.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Member.

To your first question in regard to the four full-time instructors, they will be for the rehabilitative programme instructors. I would have to get specifically what those programmes are, but I will endeavour to get that.

Your question in regard to the five full-time maintenance staff, that was in regard to the facilities? Okay, I would have to get that.

And, Madam Chairman, I'll let him ask another question while I look to get the answers.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

I understand that there was a need for another psychologist in terms of the rehabilitative staff. Is one of those positions going to be for a forensic psychologist?

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

Minister, Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

In regard to the question of the staffing level, at present there is not a full complement of staff, but we are currently recruiting to get a full complement. And we have completed a staff profiling exercise to maximise our human resources.

And the question in regard to the maintenance, the staff would include maintenance of all facilities, including plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and general maintenance.

And the question in regard to repairs and costs, the total amount for the vocational does include the repairs and to fix up the location and the cost of instructors.

Mr. Robert King: And equipment.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And equipment.

I am waiting to receive that answer. But if there's any other questions, another Member might have.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There are none, Junior Minister.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: I recognise the Member from constituency 17.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I thank the Junior Minister for bringing the supplementary estimates. We have been talking about progressing and reforming our correction system. And I believe this demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that we have a reform system that produces the outcomes that are actually necessary.

And so, we did undertake a review. As a result of that review, there were a number of gaps identified. Not all of the gaps. Some of them are operational and administrative. And others require a greater injection of funds. What we didn't want to do is wait [until] an entire new budgetary process passes to address those particular gaps. The most important thing is that the system ultimately benefits by the money that we're injecting in the system today. And so that is important.

But it is this Government's commitment to ensuring that we have real reform. And we said that we want to reform our criminal justice system. We said that we want to ensure that our prisons produce the outcomes that they were mandated to produce. And that's just not housing individuals who have committed crimes. But that's also providing enriching interventions where those persons can rehabilitate and come back in society and be productive in our economy.

And so, while we look at these being supplementary estimates, I think we should be looking at it from a lens of investing in a system that actually will produce better outcomes for the people who are actually operating within the system. And that is the workers as well as the inmates. The workers deserve to work in a dignified work environment with their basic standards being met, their safety being met, as well as the inmates deserve to have programmes in place, the support in place that they need, whether it be support from a mental health standpoint or support from assisting them with other areas of rehabilitation and also preparing for employment and the future world of work when they transition out of the system back into society in earnest.

And so, I thank the Minister for bringing this Bill. It is very much needed, but it is a Government that is actually being responsive to the needs, not just getting a report that says that we have gaps that we need to close and not doing anything about it. And so, I thank the Junior Minister for bringing this.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.
Member.

Mr. Robert King: I'm fully in full agreement . . . we are, on this side of the House, in terms of the initiatives.

We've talked about those previously. Absolutely. And we need them to be successful because we know the effect that it will have, the positive effect that it will have on the community.

Towards that end, understanding the safety and security of the persons who work inside of the walls is [there] consideration in this supplementary estimate for drone nets and cell phone jammers, understanding that contraband coming into the prison, drugs and otherwise, impacts on programme efficacy and safety.

And regarding the programmes, what is the timeline for implementation, understanding that the process has already started?

And the third question is, will data be collected and relied upon to inform programme delivery in terms of best practice, what works, what is not working? And we are measuring performance and making the necessary adjustments to ensure programme success and thereby safeguarding the community by ensuring that incarcerated persons get the necessary skills and training and services required for them to be successful.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through . . . Sorry, speak to Head 25?

I recognise the [Junior] Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I just want to go back to one of the questions that [was] asked in regard to the repairs, the cost of the vocation. It includes also the equipment and any upgrades needed for the location.

Additionally, the question in regard to the four full-time instructors. The courses will be carpentry, tiling, motor mechanics and HVAC.

And in regard to your question about psychologists, consideration will be given to the necessary professional resources to deliver the required interventions to drive change.

And the last two questions you asked, one was, is there a location to prevent drugs and drones, and all that? Yes.

I will wait to receive the advice from the technical. And then, can you again just restate the last question you asked in regard to, I believe it was deadlines and the measurements of the programmes?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, what I was speaking to . . . sorry.

The Chairman: Go ahead, continue.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

I was . . . what I was speaking to was performance measures, key performance indicators, key performance measures, making sure that what we are doing is working in achieving its objective, which is reducing recidivism by providing incarcerated persons with

the necessary skills and services so that they can adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, thinking, beliefs and behaviours. So, making sure that what we do works in accordance with best practice in other jurisdictions.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There are none.

[Junior] Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you again, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, as I wait to get the information, I do just want to say that part of this reform of the Ministry of Justice when it comes to Corrections is to ensure that when persons complete their time at Westgate and they are released back to society is that they will come out better than [when] they went in and they would have, whether it be skills or tools, [what is] needed to help reintegrate themselves back to society.

And to that end, the question of measurements, appropriate key performance indicators have been developed consistent with international standards. So as was stated in my brief, there was an overseas entity that came and did an assessment. They provided the recommendation. So, our measurements, again, will be consistent with those standards that they have used. And further to that response, this will range from level of participation and certification.

Madam Chairman, as mentioned in the brief, again, we are doing what we can to try and not only provide better opportunities for the inmates, but again, to improve the living conditions, and for the staff who are working up there. And so, this supplementary goes to achieve those ends in better providing the opportunities for inmates so that when they do come out, they will be able to have a better or more positive impact than when they went in.

To the question, again, in regard to how we measure, this will also go to this level. This will range from level of participation and certification and as well as level of recidivism. That will be measured also.

And I think that's all the questions that I did have, Madam Chairman. I hope I was able to answer them as best as the Member asked. And again . . .

The Chairman: So now you can move Head 25.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: All right.

The Chairman: I'll just ask, just in case any other persons wish to speak to Head 25.

[No audible response]

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 1, Head 25, be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 1, Head 25, be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Justice, Head 25, Corrections passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: That takes us on to Item No. 2, under the Ministry of Education. And we're looking at Head 41.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Chairman and St. George's supporter.

The Chairman: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I move that Item No. 2, Head 41, now be taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item [No.] 2, Head 41, be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION—HEAD 41

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I rise to inform Honourable Members of the supplementary estimate for Bermuda College Head 41 for the financial year 2026/27 in the amount of \$3,300,000.

Madam Chairman, this request is being brought forward to support Bermuda College to address urgent operational and strategic funding requirements that were not fully captured in the approved 2026/27 operational grant. It is also intended to protect programme delivery, strengthen student support, and maintain accreditation readiness, modernise critical systems, and support the phased implementation of the Bermuda College's Strategic Plan 2025–2030.

Madam Chairman, for the 2026/27 fiscal year, the approved operating grant for the Bermuda College is \$15,573,710. The College projects tuition and other own source revenue of approximately \$3,478,000. Its current operating budget is \$19,051,474. However, the College has advised that it requires an additional \$[3],300,000 for a total of \$22,381,474. The request before this Honourable House is therefore a targeted request to stabilise the College's operating position while enabling necessary investments in staffing, student

support, technology, facilities planning, reporting, and accreditation-related capacity.

Madam Chairman, Honourable Members will be aware that Bermuda College is implementing its Strategic Plan 2025–2030. The Plan will expand programme accessibility, attract and retain students, strengthen institutional excellence, improve alignment with Bermuda's workforce and economic priorities, and ensure the College remains a strong and credible post-secondary institution.

Unfortunately, the approved grant does not fully reflect the resources required to deliver the Strategic Plan and to meet current institutional obligations. The Ministry has begun working with the College to improve the budget preparation process, so the College builds its annual budget using a structured and adapted zero-based budgeting approach that is evidence-based and closely connected to its Strategic Plan.

Madam Chairman, the funding requested is allocated across eight priority areas as follows:

Funds totalling \$1,310,000 are requested for academic and instructional staffing. The College has identified student-facing academic and instructional posts needed for the 2025–2027 academic year. These include lecturers in English, mathematics, physics, political science, history, accounting, computer information systems, hospitality management, and insurance reinsurance. Student-facing support in financial aid, health sciences, and mathematics is also required. They reflect continuity, investment, and growth in local pathways for education and employment in growth areas that reflect Bermuda's major economic pillars. These posts are required to maintain appropriate student-faculty ratios, deliver existing programmes, and expand workforce-aligned programming.

Madam Chairman, \$320,000 is requested to fund four positions needed to strengthen student services including financial aid, testing, security, and related support functions. Student success depends not only on classroom instruction but also on timely access to advising, counselling, tutoring, financial aid support, testing services, and administrative assistance.

Ensuring the right kind of student supports are in place is critical for student success and therefore to attract and retain students. Madam Chairman, \$225,000 is requested for a facilities master plan. Bermuda College has made approximately \$5 million in facility and infrastructure modernisation investments over the past four years, including investments to address safety and health risks associated with ageing infrastructure.

The facilities master plan will provide a structured roadmap for campus modernisation, facilities use, safety and health for faculty and students, capital renewal, and future investment.

Madam Chairman, \$190,000 is requested for immediate operational maintenance and campus modernisation support. This will assist with the deferred maintenance pressures and help protect the learning

environment for students, facility staff, and the wider college community.

Madam Chairman, \$770,000 is requested to replace the College's Enterprise Resource Planning system, or ERP. This is a core institutional system that supports student information, finance, human resources, purchasing, reporting, and operational management. The College's current ERP system is approaching end of life and will be discontinued, which creates operational financial reporting, compliance, and data integrity risks. Replacement is necessary to modernise institutional systems, improve financial controls, and support real-time decision-making.

Madam Chairman, \$100,000 is requested for a student accounts portal to support self-service billing and account management for students and customers. This is directly linked to the College's own source revenue because tuition and ancillary revenue depend on efficient billing, collection, and account management. This investment will improve billing accuracy, collections, cash flow, and the student experience.

Madam Chairman, \$300,000 is requested for a data governance and reporting framework. Both the Ministry of Education and the New England Commission of Higher [Education], NECHE, the College's accrediting body, require more robust, granular, and transparent reporting. A formal data governance framework will support data quality, key performance indicators, reporting, accreditation compliance, institutional transparency, and evidence-based decision-making.

Madam Chairman, \$85,000 is requested for an economic impact assessment. This will provide independent evidence of Bermuda College's contribution to workforce development, graduate outcomes, economic resilience, productivity, and return on public investment. That work is important in order for public investment in Bermuda College to be linked to national outcomes and measurable benefits.

Madam Chairman, this supplementary estimate is necessary to help Bermuda College rise to its potential by continuous improvement of its core operational programming, ensuring that it meets the requirements of accreditation and that it delivers its Strategic Plan for improved outcomes, sustainability, and accountability. Accordingly, I ask Honourable Members to support the supplementary estimate of \$3,300,000 for Bermuda College, Head 41, for fiscal year 2026/27.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

I recognise the Opposition Leader.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you to the Minister for laying out where the \$3,300,000 will be spent for the Bermuda College, and for the grant.

Just a couple of questions because this is a significant increase from the original budget that we passed earlier this year.

Can the Minister let us know whether this \$3,300,000 was actually part of an original request that didn't get implemented in that first grant, whether this was information that had been discussed prior to the budget, or [are] these new items that have been brought in place since the budget was passed?

Specifically, on that, the Minister mentioned stabilising and staffing technology. I was trying to quickly note down all the different areas that were being covered. In that, some of it seemed to be based off of some of the assessments that were coming in order for us to get accreditation.

I guess the question is: Is this really just a timing issue where that accreditation information happened after the budget had been passed, and for that reason there are certain things that now have to be covered and we can't wait for them to be covered because we need those accreditations? If that's the context that we're talking about, then obviously we understand that and we would support that.

Can the Minister also let us know whether . . . I think I was getting from this that the potential is that there are more students that are going to be attending the Bermuda College. And because of that there now needs to be an increase in resources in order to cover that increase in the students. If that is the case, I think that would be important for us to know.

I know that in attending the CedarBridge graduation, it was one of the things that was brought up several times. There seems to be more students who are attending the Bermuda College. And I know that it is one of the mandates of the College to really increase the number of people who are attending our college so that we can understand how important it is that we have a college in Bermuda that gives access to accredited education, saves people money, but also gives them an opportunity to learn here in our environment.

So, if the Minister can let us know whether some of those changes that we're having to do to get this money is specifically because there's going to be increase. Because it sounded, from the information that the Minister gave, that we needed to increase instruction in certain areas, not because we don't have instructors now, but we need more instructors because of the increase in what is going to be needed.

In that context, can the Minister let us know, because I know that when you are looking to hire educators, this would have been a process that they are going to have to get on immediately because there's a recruiting process in order to get the level of instructors that they're going to want to have at the College. Can he let us know whether that is already in process so that we can make sure that when the College reopens that they actually have the resources that are needed.

The Minister also talked about the facilities master plan. Could the Minister let us know whether

this was something that had been requested previously and now we are getting to funding this plan, or was this once again something that came up through the accreditation process that it was then deemed to be necessary and that's why this is now having to be implemented and this cost has now come in the supplementary estimate?

The Minister talked about a deferred maintenance pressure. So, I guess my question is: Were there issues that the College had identified that needed to be addressed that were not addressed in the original budget and now they become critical because we want to make sure that we are maintaining the facility and improving the facility to continue to encourage students to go to the Bermuda College? And, if that is the case, is this something that we are going to have to continue to increase to make sure that the College is at the level that is necessary?

I guess a bigger question is: Now that we've moved from the original number to this new number in this budget year, does the Minister believe that this will be the targeted budget that we will need to go forward in order for the College to maintain the increase in student population? If that is true, the increase in maintenance needs, if that's what the case is, so that we have an understanding that going forward it won't be a supplementary estimate. This will be the new norm for what is necessary for the College to maintain itself. And if the Minister could let us know whether really the College might need even more than this going forward in order for them to be able to improve the facilities, do everything that is necessary to get the technology in place, the support for the students, so that as we move to making the College more accessible to more people, it is going to also mean that we're going to have to increase the resources for the College for it to be able to reach the level that I think everybody is looking for.

The Minister also looked at the outcomes that are connected to work. Can the Minister give us a little more detail on what that connection is between what I would gather would be the Department of Labour, what is necessary, what jobs are they looking for training for and then how that is then moved over to the College so that they can implement those courses to match what is going to be necessary from what is identified from labour, and whether those costs are identified that potentially we are going to have to see further increases as the Ministry of Labour identifies new areas that we need to have training in?

With that, I think I'll let the Minister answer those questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: As my team is furiously writing, I will say I've only been on the docket for two weeks.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, no, but I have [delved] into this stuff.

The answer to the first question: Was this part of the original grant? It was not part of the original grant. It was actually a timing issue, which kind of goes into the next question. It was a timing issue. The NECHE report . . . the NECHE visit was in the middle of February. And so, it identified some things that needed to be done at that point. And so, it was a time . . . some of this is a timing issue for that.

The expected increase you asked about: [Will] more students be attending the College? Obviously, we talked . . . you've heard us talk about the College Promise Programme, which has seen an increase in students attending the Bermuda College as people . . . things cost a little bit more than they did back in the day. And people are seeing the value of attending the Bermuda College, especially under the College Promise Programme and able to get that associate's degree, you know, for practically nothing, and then move on to higher level education by saving two years' worth of tuition locally. So, we will be seeing more . . . We will be seeing more students attend the Bermuda College.

There are . . . Also, I've been made to understand (I don't see it here) that part of this plan is to introduce a reinsurance degree in this coming year. So that's where some of that staff is actually going to be there. We're also looking at revised programmes . . . revised programmes in engineering, needing physics classes and the like. So, there will be . . . there is a plan to increase student enrolment.

I'm trying to follow these things. And the hiring of educators is already well underway. And this funding is to actually pay those salaries, not to go out and find them. So, I've been made to understand they are in the docket. And if they showed up, there may not be the funding there for them.

The facilities master plan, which you did ask [about]. The facilities master plan is . . . again, that was timing, and it's currently being developed. And that's where the funding is being asked. I do recall reading in the brief that they were asking for funding. So that can be fully fleshed out as we move forward.

The next question was [about] deferred maintenance pressures. Were things allotted for in the original budget? Again, these are some things that have come up, basically a timing issue, and came up after the budget process had been completed. And you heard me speak to the Ministry comptroller and the Bermuda College working at what a refined budgeting process could look like moving forward so we can have a more accurate account on the particular day.

This kind of speaks to something that I know has always stuck in my craw, that our schooling system's budget doesn't align with government's budget. And you have each school year that crosses over two budget cycles. And so that can sometimes just not

potentially line up on how we want to do what we need to do with our schools.

I'm hoping when we talk about an Education Authority that they can look at it and say, *Hey, how do we realign our budget to suit the school year, so we don't actually have to budget up to halfway through the year and then look to budget the next time through that.*

Was this a targeted increase in grant? Okay. This supplemental will bring us up to the new norm for finance, and budget planning for the next cycle is underway. So, of course, these fundings, this funding is here. And if it's paying for, in this case, instructors, obviously it's going to be something that needs to be included in subsequent budgets. So, I think we're covered there.

And outcomes connected to work. I will say when you talked about connection of labour and the like, you may not be aware, but the Workforce Development is now located at the Bermuda College. So, there is a synergy there that's been created by moving them from their current location to the College. So, there is . . . and they work very, very closely with especially the PACE department. They work very, very closely, especially with the PACE department, to come up with, you know, training courses that helps upskill Bermudians who perhaps are looking to go back to school and gain another skill and the like.

So, I hope with those I've answered your questions, but I will sit down in case there are more.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak

I recognise the Opposition Leader. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And thank you to the Minister for those answers. I really just have one further set of questions really on that maintenance plan and what the . . . Can you could give us some specifics on the maintenance that is necessary now? And are there some areas that we can look [at] that need to be addressed? So as we look forward to the maintenance of the College and the improvement of the College, I want to make sure that what we're doing is looking forward to it so that we don't need supplementals. We [will] actually know this is what the College needs in order to get to the goals that they're looking for, and this is how much it's going to cost.

So, can the Minister can give us an idea of what the maintenance is necessary right now under this \$3 million? Can he give us some details on that and the potential of what has been requested that might not already be in this one?

Thank you.

The Chairman: I recognise the Minister.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: As for looking in the future, that's what the master facilities plan will look like. I do know currently now if you go up there you see scaffolding all over the place where they're replacing roofs on different buildings and the like. I know when I was in my previous iteration in this we would . . . I was taken to a building, and you could stand inside and look and see the sunlight coming through.

So, I know they have been . . . we approved additional monies back then. And I understand exactly what you're saying. Because back then it was here's additional money for this, here's additional money for that. So, I'm very grateful to see that a full facilities plan is being designed so we can say this is what we need. And if it has to be a multi-year request, capital request, that can be planned for versus, kind of, you know, *oh, something else is wrong, let me fix that. Something else is wrong, let me fix that.*

And I do know upgrading the computer systems throughout the school, improving the Internet accessibility as we . . . the type of world we live in is all part of those things. So, having a master plan on how we go from where we are now to where we want to be is something that I'm grateful to hear that's happening and I look forward to seeing that in the eventual future.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam Chairman, and I thank the Shadow Education Minister and Leader of the Opposition . . . of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Madam Chairman, I move that [Item] No. 2 and Head 41 now be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 2, Head 41 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Education, Head 41, Bermuda College passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam [Chairman]. And I will say that we will get you a Bermuda College tie to go with your CedarBridge tie.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Okay. All right. That takes us on to the next item, Item No. 3.

Junior Minister, I do realise that in your brief you already accounted for Corrections—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Chairman: So go ahead.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE—HEAD 65

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 3, Head 65 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 3, Head 65 be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

The Chairman: There are none.

Go ahead. Speak to—

An Hon. Member: Madam Chairman, I move that No. 3, Head number 65, now be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Head 65 be approved. And again, I just want to remind everyone that when the Junior Minister did the previous [Head] 25, he also spoke to Head 65, so all that is really needed . . . and questions were asked on those. So, all that is really needed is for us to approve it.

So, are there any objections to approve Head 65?

There are none. So approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Justice, Head 65, passed.]

The Chairman: Okay, that takes us to item 4, Public Lands and Buildings.

Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that item No. 4, Head 65 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be taken under consideration.

Any objections?

There are none, continue.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT—HEAD 65

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I shall not be long, very quick. Madam Chairman, last week the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance tabled supplementary estimates totalling \$22.3 million, which included funding to complete the Government's acquisition of the Compass Point building.

Madam Chairman, you will recall that on the 12th of June of this year, this House approved the purchase of Compass Point. During that debate it was explained that the negotiated purchase price of \$14.5

million would be financed through supplementary funding. The additional appropriation before the House today will complete the purchase and provide funding for the immediate works required to prepare the building for Government occupancy.

Madam Chairman, this investment supports Government's long-term strategy of reducing expenditure on privately leased office accommodation while strengthening the government estate. Rather than continuing to spend millions of dollars each year on commercial rent, this acquisition allows Government to invest in an asset that will deliver value for the people of Bermuda for decades to come.

The Compass Point building provides more than 81,000 square feet of office accommodation and, importantly, creates the flexibility needed to temporarily relocate government departments while ageing public buildings undergo refurbishment and modernisation. This is a critical component of our wider estate management strategy that will enable important capital works that would otherwise be far more difficult to undertake.

Madam Chairman, the decision to acquire Compass Point has already been approved by this Honourable House. Today's supplementary estimate simply provides the funding necessary to implement that decision and move this important initiative forward.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

I recognise the Member from constituency 9.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Thank you, Minister, for that brief explanation.

[I have a] couple of questions for the Minister. He says the differential between the \$14.5 [million] purchase price and the \$15.2 [million] that we see here today is for funding to complete the purchase and to start the works required. Are we talking about legal fees? Because I calculate \$700,000. Is that for legal fees? And how does that . . . What is the amount of the legal fees if that is legal fees?

And when we had the motion for this purchase, we talked about . . . I believe it was \$1.5 million that was the estimated cost for repairs. Is that . . . You say start of works . . . Is that start of works part of the roof repairs, or is this some internal fittings to get that ready? And if it is not the roof, then when can we expect funds coming through, or the supplemental for that, if money is required?

The Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you.

I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The reality is that the vast majority of that

\$700,000 difference (He is correct.) will go towards roof repairs. It is the most critical piece of repair that needs to happen, but a very small portion. And I think it is . . . I think it is roughly \$20,000. It is a very insignificant in comparison as a relation to some IT upgrades.

The Chairman: Okay, are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

I recognise the Member from constituency nine.

Mr. Vance Campbell: So is the . . . Was the estimate, Minister, for the roof repairs of one . . . I believe it was \$1.5 million when we previously debated this. Are we just dealing with the most important at this time and other roof repairs will follow?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes. Yes, that is correct. The focus is repairing. There are some leaks at the top. The focus is on repairing those leaks. But, certainly in subsequent budgets, there will be proportionate funding to assist with further repairs so that we can move in and complete.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

There being none . . . Minister.

An Hon. Member: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And I thank the Honourable Member for his questions.

And with that I move that item No. 4, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are not. So approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works and Environment, Head 65, passed.]

The Chairman: That brings us to the final item, item 5, Head 66, and I call on the relevant Minister [for] Information and Digital Technologies.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that item number—

The Chairman: Five.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —No. 5, Head—

The Chairman: Sixty-six.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I have Head 43. That is why I was triple checking. [It is] 66 in the paper. Okay. It may be just a typo in my documentation. I am—

The Chairman: It comes under capital works, so that is why it might be different.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Okay, no problem. So, [I move that Head] 66 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 66 be considered. Are there any objections? There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF DIGITAL INNOVATION—HEAD 66

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I rise to seek approval for the supplemental funding in the amount of \$1,300,000 for the Department of Information and Digital Technologies under Head 66 for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Information and Digital Technologies is responsible for providing and supporting the government's enterprise technology environment. One of the most critical components of that environment is the government's Microsoft 365 platform, which supports email, collaboration, document management, cybersecurity, and productivity services for public officers across the ministries and departments. The platform is currently licenced for 2,700 users government-wide with every ministry and department covered under this arrangement.

Madam Chairman, the need for supplemental funding arises from a budget transition oversight. This is an administrative gap in the budget preparation process, specifically the transfer of a known reoccurring cost between funding categories and not a lapse in expenditure control or contract management.

The initial acquisition of Microsoft 365 licences was funded through the 2025/26 capital budget as part of the government's digital modernisation programme. That programme's purpose is to move government service delivery onto a secure cloud-based platform that is easier for the public to access and use, and these licences are the foundation on which it runs. One tangible example is departments' use of Microsoft forms, which lets ministries put applications and requests online so a user of a government service does not need to visit the government office in person for routine transactions.

The licensing arrangement also carries security benefits under the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. Government mailbox and cloud storage data can be held within a designated data residency location strengthening the protection of government and public information. While the initial acquisition was

appropriately funded as a capital investment, the Microsoft 365 operates on a subscription-based model that requires annual licence renewals. As such, the reoccurring renewal cost should have transitioned to the department's current account budget beginning in the fiscal year 2026/27. However, during the budget development process, the transition of these reoccurring costs from capital funding to operational funding was not reflected in the department's approved budget resulting in an unfunded requirement for the licence renewal period.

The department has since revised its budget preparation procedures to ensure that reoccurring subscription costs transition from capital to current account funding and are identified and captured at the point of a budget submission. The recurring renewal costs for these licences will be reflected in the department's approved 2027/28 current account budget, and no further supplemental requests of this nature are anticipated. Consequently, supplemental funding is required to meet the government's contractual licencing obligations and ensure uninterrupted access to these critical services through the 31st of March 2027.

Madam Chairman, the supplemental funding request totals \$1,300,000 and will be used exclusively for the renewal of the Microsoft 365 subscription licence. This is a like-for-like renewal of the department's existing complement of the 2700 licences. This represents maintenance, not expansion of the current licence count, and no additional licences are being procured under this request. The amount reflects the renewal cost under the government's existing Microsoft Enterprise Agreement and is [a] renewal of existing licences therefore not subject to new competitive procurement.

This funding will ensure the continued availability of government email and calendar services, Microsoft Teams communication and collaboration capabilities, SharePoint document management services, OneDrive cloud storage services, identity management and cybersecurity protections, and productivity applications used daily by public officers.

Madam Chairman, beyond continuity of service, maintaining this licence base carries practical value for public service delivery. It allows the departments to keep the online self-service tools referenced above running, which support more effective and accessible interactions between the government and the people that [it] serves and which reduce the administrative burden on the public officers who would otherwise have to process the same transactions manually.

Madam Chairman, failure to secure this funding would result in the expiration of the licences and loss of access by government users, deleting, disruption and email services, loss of collaboration capabilities, increased business continuity, security, and operational risks. Given the government's reliance on Microsoft 365 as a core enterprise platform, licence

expiration would materially impact government operations and the delivery of public services.

Approval of the supplemental funding request, Madam Chairman, will ensure that the continuity of these critical digital services across government are maintained and secure access to essential information and community communication systems.

Madam Chairman, I therefore recommend approval of the supplemental funding in the amount of \$1,300,000 for the Department of Information and Digital Technologies to provide for the renewal of the Microsoft 365 subscription licence and ensure the continued operation of critical government technology services.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 5, Head 66?

There are no other persons.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that item No. 5, Head 66 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 66 be approved.

Are there any objections? There are none.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Digital Information, Head 66, passed.]

The Chairman: I now call on the Minister of Housing and Municipalities.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Madam Acting Chairman.

I move that the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be reported as printed to the House.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none. So approved.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Gavel]

House resumed at 6:15 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

The Speaker: Deputy? Did you have a good run? Okay.

Members, are there . . . Consideration of Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 . . . [was] approved, and sent back to the House without any objections.

Thank you.

That means you are now moved on to item number 6. Item number 6 is the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Home of Affairs and Digital Transformation.

Minister?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill entitled the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections? There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present to this Honourable House the Bill entitled, the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026. This Bill amends the Cost of Living Commission Act 1974 and carries into it the work that this Government has invested for the people of Bermuda through oversight of the cost of essential goods, designation of critical services that shape household budgets, and cooperation between the Commission and Bermuda's regulators. It delivers another step in the Government's commitment to address affordability in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, before I speak to the clauses of this Bill, I thought it prudent to share what I brought with me to the House of Assembly today. And for Honourable Members' awareness, and every Bermudian listening at home, I hold and have a bag of rice which is found in every kitchen cabinet on this Island. And I brought it because this legislation and its changes are about affordability. And I share it as the foundation of the legislative changes presented today.

Mr. Speaker, this very bag of rice explains today's amendments better than any statement or any clause or any explanation can. Rice and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Rice is an item—

Bermuda House of Assembly

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Rice is an item originally included in the Schedule of [the Cost of Living] (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022. It has been a regulated staple since those regulations took effect in June of 2022. It enters Bermuda entirely free of customs duty. Not one grain of it [is] grown here in Bermuda. Every bag is produced overseas across the ocean, lands at Hamilton Docks through a single stevedoring provider, moves through a warehouse, and reaches a shelf.

Retailers themselves have told the Commission at its stakeholders' meeting of May 29, 2026, that freight accounts for around 60 per cent of the cost of landing goods on this Island, and that the grocery basket this bag of rice now sits in costs 38 per cent more than it did a decade ago. Measured over the last 10 years to 2025, this equates to more than double the rate of general inflation.

Mr. Speaker, the question that this bag of rice puts [to] us specifically reveals the truth of what it costs to land in our Island and what a family pays for it at the checkout. The legislative changes presented in this Honourable House today are built to bring transparency and oversight into that space.

Mr. Speaker, Bermudians old and young have told this Government in every parish and at every doorstep that the cost of living is felt hardest by those who can least afford it. I have personally heard from seniors forecasting how their pensions will reach, from young families weighing the grocery bill against their other competing monthly expenses, and from workers holding two jobs yet still finding themselves stretched at the end of the month. Honourable Members on both sides of this House have raised these pressures in this Chamber time and time again. And rightly so, because the call for action comes from every single constituency on this Island, from St. George's to Somerset, that we were each elected to represent.

Mr. Speaker, to understand what this Bill does, the House must also understand the history of this Act. The Cost of Living Commission Act was passed in 1974 in an era of global inflation as price control legislation. Its central part still carries the heading "Control of Price Increases of Specified Commodities." Its measure is a reasonable rate of return on investment and of reasonable reserves, which is the vocabulary that we know relates specifically to the cost of electricity.

The Parliament of 1974 built machinery that was intended to regulate what the people of that era considered as essential service and critical to daily life. The Second Schedule of that very Act once included the Bermuda Electric Light Company Limited as a specified business. Electric supply was [a] specified commodity. The price of electricity has, 52 years later, emerged as a fundamental driver of the cost of living today.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda, though facing challenges reflected of a previous era, has evolved, and we have since built dedicated regulations for several of our essential services previously contemplated. We know that we have the Regulatory Authority, which is informed and does the appropriate oversight of the Electricity Act 2016.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments presented today honour the spirit of that architecture, but they name household utilities including electricity, telecommunications, and water among critical services. Using this Bill as a vehicle for transparency it requires the Commission to work with relevant stakeholders and regulators rather than around them. Where the laws conflict, the sectoral legislation stands firm, except for the duty to collaborate with the Commission, which is a key feature of transparency.

Fifty-two years later, Mr. Speaker, in response to the needs of the community, we are now restoring the elements of the original machinery, once successfully exercised [and] defended. But we are specifically modernising it to include critical goods and services, a frame with a strengthened architecture of transparency with other established regulators representing modern regulatory safeguards.

Mr. Speaker, though I hasten to dwell on the past, the record of 1974 and today tells a compelling story. It tells a story that for more than four decades the substance of this Act stood still while the needs of the people grew. Progress under this Administration began in 2017 when this Government raised the penalties for non-compliance to \$5,000 with daily default fines, and replaced the name of Price Control Commission with the Cost of Living Commission.

The second came in 2020 when this Government created the public price database for essential commodities brought into force on 17 June 2022 and given effect by the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022. The same regulation that places this very bag of rice under oversight today alongside the flour, the bread, and the pasta that feed most families on our Island.

Mr. Speaker, in 2025 the Throne Speech pledged fair pricing and transparency measures. An Act that has slept for [a] generation has been awoken and put into action. But the Bill before this House today is the most substantial reform that this legislation has had since its formation.

Mr. Speaker, honesty underpins the work better than any accolade or triumph. We acknowledge that the Act, even as amended, remains imperfect, and its enforcement powers went ignored for years. For years, the Cost of Living Commission has chronicled its challenges in receiving compliance from sectoral participants in response to data requests even to this day. While its language of price control was written by a 1974 Parliament for a 1974 economy, the price oversight that is presented requires the Commission to

monitor, ask questions, and publish the findings. The market will continue to function and set its prices.

Mr. Speaker, Members should be aware that since the reconstitution of the Commission in 2025, Members have been candid, and they have accepted that affordability work is a process. This Bill represents a thoughtful acceptance that further steps will follow but only as the evidence directs.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission includes representation from across Bermuda, and Members should also know that around the Commission table the views have been forthright, and at times revealed frustration with the fact that the tools of the current Acts [fall] short of the public expectation.

In 2025, they were given a schedule of 33 essential goods. While families felt compounded pressures of bills, they confirmed that their current powers were just not enough. They said from the outset that affordability must mean more than the 33 essential goods, and asked for the data to understand the full picture, the evidence to form conclusions based on pricing trends, cost to importers, [and] operational expenses which all play a critical role in forming the cost on the shelf. The Commission accepts that this is a critical foundation to substantive recommendations, but they each must be made in an informed way in the public good. This Bill gives commissioners the tools propelled by a Government mission and mandate for care and unwavering dedication and determination.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is true to its values and has listened. And, while not traditional, has invited the Cost of Living Commission to co-create the basis of this reform. Since 2025, the decisions have moved step-by-step. Members will recall the Cost of Living Summit; the national surveys; the Affordable Bermuda Agenda published last year; the expanded list of commodities in the 2026/27 budget; the Affordable Bermuda Basket, the partnership with retailers and wholesalers—legislative enhancements that were always intended to move in parallel for the nine months.

Today this marks another step to deliver on the foundation, reinvigorating oversight. The Commission has asked to be empowered to influence and to be given the data that reflects the commitment that they have to make a true impact on the cost of living in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, let me place on the record why this Government is clear-eyed on what is needed in support of the public. When we began this journey in 2025, we heard from residents, and we heard from businesses who wanted us to both understand their operations and their concerns. They were clear in what they wanted from the Government. This summit revealed that the public wished to see the zero rate of duty moved to more essential goods and medications. They wanted to require transparency so that every dollar of relief reaches the customers at the register, the partnerships with private sector, and collaboration ensuring that we would hold the partnership to account.

Shipping cost would be addressed and/or subsidised. Cap electricity rates and internet charges. Introduce tiered rates of all utilities. Protect low-income households. And welcome new importers so that no single supplier holds a family's basket.

More than 300 recommendations reached the Ministry and were refined with stakeholders through the summer of 2025. And the summit that has convened was just a catalyst for transparent, coordinated action. Industry was invited to join, and some did. The public also told what they wanted from us in return: practical action-orientated outcomes, clear solutions, real data, and a Government that would be engaged with the costs and pressures that residents faced.

Mr. Speaker, reflecting on this year's budget, we have now successfully delivered the deepest duty relief on essential goods of 198 tariff amendments effective from April 2026, an estimate of \$4.6 million in annual duty foregone across \$50.7 million of imports. But Mr. Speaker, what we know is that duty cut, though representing relief, is only relief if it is also felt at the register. As it stands today, no law on our books lets the Government confirm that a dollar of duty foregone becomes a dollar saved on the shelf. The ethos that this Government must reestablish, as done in 1974, is to trust but also verify. The Bill presented in this Honourable House answers the questions of who on behalf of the people is checking to make sure.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda does not walk this road alone, and it is prudent for Members to also understand that we will not be the first jurisdiction to advance measures of this nature. The Bahamas operates statutory price control on a defined breadbasket of essentials, and widened that list in 2022 when inflation hit hardest. Jamaica's Consumer Affairs Commission publishes comparative grocery price surveys so families can see who charges what.

The United Kingdom has kept a statutory adjudicator over its supermarkets since 2013, and in 2023 its Competition and Markets Authority examined grocery pricing and asked whether the falling costs were indeed reaching the shelf. New Zealand answered a concentrated island grocery market with the dedicated grocery commissioner and an annual public report. Australia has made its Food and Grocery Code of Conduct mandatory.

None of those administrations have torn that machinery down to this date. But set beside them is the Bill before this House, which we would argue is the measured cousin. Our neighbours cap prices by law. But this Bill is asking for a notice to inform the public, and it also begins with an empty schedule. I anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that arguments from this framework will speak to suggest that this goes further. But what it is seeking to do is to shine the light where nobody has been watching.

The Regulatory Authority watches energy and communications. The Bermuda Monetary Authority watches our banks and our insurers. Environmental

health officers walk every commercial kitchen on this Island. Yet from the dock through the warehouse to the shelf for goods that every family buys for their dignity, no regulator knows exactly what the costs are, a watchman at a gate that has stood unguarded. And costs are real. At the end of the day the evidence will show that they are real. And the public will finally see how their dollars are spent and the chains that sit. They will also appreciate operational expenses that are present and real within our major retailers and wholesalers.

Mr. Speaker, this Island knows better than most places on earth that strong oversight and a thriving market live together. No industry in Bermuda is more closely supervised than international insurance, and no industry has brought Bermuda greater success. The Bermuda Monetary Authority's standards are recognised as equivalent in Europe and respected in the United States. And the world's insurers choose Bermuda because the supervision adds value. Oversight well done is the reputation a market trades on. The businesses that feed this Island deserve a framework that they could rely on and also have comfort from, and so do the families that they serve.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments before this House are aligned to the regulations seen in many sectors and make principled reforms. It is establishing the designation of critical services linking this very bag of rice across its way to the table, which can now be seen transparently. Each critical service designation requires consultation with the Commission and any responsible sector regulator. And every designation comes to the legislature for approval under an affirmative resolution procedure.

Businesses on the Second Schedule must give the Commission written notice of such increases before they take effect. An essential commodity enters only where it is considered necessary in the public interest after consulting the Commission, and only by an Order that this legislature approves. Prescribed categories of businesses such as grocery stores . . . So that obligations fall evenly across the sector, and no single merchant is singled out, the Commission will monitor, question, and publish. And for a commodity that is on the Schedule, the Act remains a machinery of Part II and notified of increases including the powers of the Commission under section 4 retaining the right of an appeal. The safeguards that sit in section 7(1A) and 7(1B), the public interest test consultation with the Commission and the approval of the Legislature, provide sunlight into sectors that for too long have been in darkness.

The Bill recognises that our market is actually built where one company or one related business carries two or more links in a supply chain from freight, to wholesale, to retail. The Minister may have regard to that concentration when designating a critical service. Related companies are those sharing common ownership control, or directors, or otherwise significant commercial relationships. Mr. Speaker, scale cannot be ignored and is a material fact of living on an Island. A

prudent Government recognises that concentration without scrutiny leads to uninformed governance, duplicate processes, and unsubstantiated decisions or conclusions.

The Bill directs attentions to duty relief, and when the Government reduces duty on essential goods, families deserve to see that that relief has reached the register. And the Government must know that its fiscal sacrifices have not occurred in vain. Mr. Speaker, the Commission may now enquire into whether duty reductions or other cost reliefs granted on a scheduled commodity are passed through to the prices consumers pay. And the Commission's annual report will assess the effect of that relief across essential commodities. This Honourable House and the public should be able to take comfort knowing that the \$4.6 million of relief in this year's budget will be stewarded, and it will be stewarded well.

The Bill requires the Commission to lay the annual report before the Legislature, and that report will regularly demonstrate the hard work advanced by the Cost of Living Commission by including its findings on affordability indicators, pricing trends and market structures, the effect of duty reductions, and other reliefs and also barriers to competition.

The Bill writes cooperation into law recognising the value, Mr. Speaker, of information sharing and dismantling the flawed silos of structures. The amendments ensure that the Commission consults the regulator responsible for any sector that it examines, adding capacity and demonstrating joined-up governance. The Commission is therefore empowered to conduct joint market studies with those regulators. Importantly, confidential information that is held by other regulators remains protected. This results in a framework that removes duplication and closes the gap currently present between regulators.

The Bill provides fair and proportionate enforcement ensuring that a business aggrieved by a decision of the Commission has a right to appeal to the Minister, and from the Minister's decision to the Supreme Court, which may remit the matter for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, as what can be forecasted as the routine response, the Bill has written answers within its own text. The replaced Second Schedule commences empty, exactly as a Schedule it replaces has stood since 2009. No businesses face price oversites on a day that this Act takes effect, but rather oversight engages only where a designation has been consulted on, brought to the Legislature, and duly approved by the elected representatives of this House. Notice, due process, and the right to appeal remain with the Supreme Court and run through the architecture of these amendments. A family that can compare prices across every shelf on this Island holds more choice in its hands.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to speak directly to the countless families who have asked for this

Administration to be unwavering in its effort to lower the cost of living. The amendments presented today mean three important things:

- 1) The structures that set the price of rice, of bread, of the light bill, and the phone bill will operate and have oversight transparently and in plain sight.
- 2) When duty revenue is sacrificed and cut by this Government or by any successive Government, the Commission's role is to monitor and report on the impact it has on families. And when the price of essential items on the Schedule rises, that increase will be notified and examined and explained to the people.
- 3) Every year a report laid before this Legislature requires transparency and will show that the Commission found what steps it took. That accountability is now written into the letter of the law itself.

Mr. Speaker, affordability is a key feature of living in Bermuda with dignity, and it underpins our quality of life. As Minister and as a representative of the people, I have provided a framework to act on—what the people have requested. The concern for affordability has been raised time and time again in this House, and the constituents of every Member represented in this House feel it. I invite Honourable Members to examine this Bill and its merits and to support legislation that offers no silver bullet, but delivers the very answers requested on doorsteps that demand change as loudly as it does for us.

Mr. Speaker, when I leave the Chamber, this very bag of rice and the price that is attached to it come under a framework of more informed and more accountable governance. The arc of this work runs from listening, to legislating, and ultimately to delivering. The listening [is] filled with the Cost of Living Summit and the public's responses to surveys. It evidences tangibly the actions taken that began on a doorstep conversation that will be felt at kitchen tables. The reforms that began in 2017, deepened in 2020 and 2022, are now strengthened by the work of a responsible Government that is responsive to the people that it has pledged to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

MP Robinson?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the intent of this Bill, because it is very important that all of us are united in attempting to make the cost of living easier for Bermudians. So, in that regard, we do definitely understand where the spirit of this legislation is.

The unfortunate part is that when you look at . . . certainly, even given the Minister's example of a

certain bag of rice, we have grocers who now bring in tiered-price products, where you could have a ShopRite bag of rice that is cheaper than the Uncle Ben's bag of rice. And this is how Bermudians have been shopping for very long, being able to find cost savings within the structure that we have, not excusing the fact that obviously a business must make a profit.

But the main crux of this particular legislation that is a sticking point is, number one, it is a short jump from price controls. It allows the Minister to potentially . . . "The Minister may," as it says, intercept or change the percentage of a pay rise if it is over 5 per cent.

Now this takes away the flexibility and operational requirement of a business to respond to their cost of business. And because we are, at the end of day, looking to represent the consumer—we are looking to represent our constituents—we have to understand that if we remove the flexibility, or at the least even infringe on that flexibility for businesses to respond to their cost of living, that in itself will harm the consumer because, as we know, whatever cost is incurred by the business will pass on to the consumer. That is just the facts of life.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information.

The Speaker: Would you like to make a point of information?

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do appreciate the Honourable Member in his contribution accepting the spirit of the legislation. I do believe that he has understood the provision of a 5 per cent increase incorrectly. It is actually a notice. So, a notice, therefore providing the public with forewarning in advance of them arriving at the grocery store and seeing that the price has suddenly jumped exponentially.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Member.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It also has a piece in there that says it can . . . that percentage can also be altered by a Minister. So, it is . . . the . . . the main point is that, yes, it does say that. But we will move on.

The main point is that I was here in 2020 in another place when we debated the first part of this legislation, another amendment that was similar to this legislation. And assurances were given on the floor of that other place that these particular provisions would not be brought into place under this Government. And I

recall that Senate debate in another place where the operational realities were brought forward. And at that time the Government team accepted that and said that there will be no price controls. There will be none of these mentions of what you are speaking about when it comes to trying to cap or interfere in the pricing of a business.

So, this will cause increased administrative burden, increased regulatory burden on a business that is operating within Bermuda within these sectors, that, inadvertently, will be passed on to the . . . to the consumer rather . . . again, whether we like it or not.

And I believe that in our quest to lower costs . . . and we try to force them down in a way that does not align with how our economy works, we can cause an adverse effect where, because [you] cannot charge, or because [you] are timid to charge, or whatever phraseology is being used right now, you can end up [causing] the business to begin to cut costs, or begin to seek to look for a lesser variety of goods because it no longer is feasible for them to bring them in. And so, what you have done is given the consumer less variety.

And we all know that if costs become exponential, there is one controllable outcome. There is one controllable cost that every business has, and that is staff. You cannot . . . you cannot control your BELCO bill, per se. You cannot control your electricity. But what you will see is that if folks feel as though this legislation inhibits their ability to be flexible with the price and to respond to costs of business, they may just cause potential layoffs.

And so, if a business is straddled with that amount of additional red tape, we may see an adverse effect for the consumer—

An Hon. Member: I hope you have come with a solution.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, it is a good thing—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, no. I am glad that . . . I am glad that the Minister asked for solutions.

So that moves me to my next point. I believe that the Minister will get more bang for her buck, in a sense, [with] legislation using anti-monopoly laws, bringing forward competition. That is something that I think we have seen, a consolidation in these areas. Once you bring in anti-monopoly laws where a business now is subject to not being able to consolidate in a certain sector, you will find more competition, which will cause a decrease in costs because people will be now competing for business.

Right now, what we are seeing in multiple sectors is a monopoly, an effective monopoly. So, you are seeing it obviously in our energy sector, in grocery, in health care, these consolidations of large entities within our economy. And by attempting to price control them

you are missing the key aspect, that you are disproportionately tackling smaller entities that cannot spread their cost, that cannot take on an additional regulatory burden, and creating an additional hurdle for the new businesses who might wish to compete or break up or go toe-to-toe with these monopolies. When you have more than 10 stores, [you] can spread that regulatory cost. But what about small entities that are in this industry that have to do these same requirements?

And so, I [will] just ask the Minister a few questions: What was the feedback that she received from consultation with the entities that are being affected by this legislation? Did they flag any potential issues that they may face adhering to this legislation? Was there an impact assessment done to show whether or not this could inadvertently cause an increase in cost for the consumer, for our constituents?

And these are the things that I have been listening out for because as we have spoken to some of the entities that are affected by this legislation . . . And they are quite scared, point-blank, because they feel as though this is going to be a heavy hand on them and stop competition and allow even more large entities to continue to consolidate the market.

We believe that it is the Government's responsibility to foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurship, that aids with the cost of doing business so that there are jobs and opportunities for Bermudians within this economy. Now I know I am not the only one who hears about the cost of doing business in Bermuda and how that affects especially in the food sector, in the grocery sector and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And this is . . . and this is a fundamental mistake that we make in this House as well, when it comes to separating the cost of living from the cost of business.

The cost of business is the cost of living because you are . . . the people . . . The people who are going to consume these goods, consume these services, if [the] cost of doing business was lower, that business should charge less, which will in turn help the consumer. If you have only so many places where you can purchase your bag of rice, because there is only one company selling a bag of rice, or if you only have so many places where you can get your health insurance from, and whatever premium you get is what you get, that is the crux of our issue in this society as we speak now. And that is why I am saying if you went the other way, which is anti-monopoly, I think that you could achieve the goal that you are looking for with this legislation.

It also speaks to the fact that most private sector . . . any private sector, regardless of which Government it is, is nervous when a Minister is giving themselves a certain amount of authority to ask for data to . . . to . . . to get into their business. Because what

happens is whenever a Bermudian who seeks to start a business, or whenever [a] Bermudian is looking to get their prices brought down, they are not looking for their fellow Bermudians to be laid off in order to get a cheaper loaf of bread. I am sure Bermudians would want fellow Bermudians to stay working, as they are employed, and see their cost of living brought down.

Mr. Dennis Lister III Mr. Speaker? Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And just to the ending Member, I think he is overlooking that there is also duty relief.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Misleading [the] House, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The part of this legislation allows for the duty relief on essential goods. So, if we are giving relief to the grocer, or the entity, the expectation is that that relief is then passed on to the consumer. So, I hear what you are saying, but they are getting a relief.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: Say that again.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: That is on the grocer when they have relief.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go ahead, Member.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, speaking to that, there was a solution given at the Cost of Living Summit, which I listened to, which spoke to non-stickered fruit and how that would potentially reduce 20 [per cent] to 40 per cent of fruit imports. So, there have been solutions that are given by the grocers, by many other people. And so, the whole point of duty relief passing on to the customer . . . I would say that you do see some of that passed on. But obviously it needs to be in a more structured way, whereas you do not have a consolidation of power or consolidation of purchasing power with a specific entity. And so, I think that we are not necessarily tackling the issue that we need to be tackling here.

In our efforts to lower costs, we cannot unintentionally harm our constituents and consumers. Potential job loss, less variety, reduced services, and

more barriers to compete with larger businesses is hurting our constituents. We cannot simply ignore the cost of business when we are talking about the cost of living, because both must be balanced. We all want cheaper goods for our citizens. But we do not want to compromise the level of service, the level of goods, the level of employment that—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, it is very interesting that one of the Members here is seeking to be premier. And eventually when he is premier, hopefully he will have to understand that cost of business is crucial. And I hope that he is singing that same tune from that side of the House, if he is successful in his election. But you have to weigh both things.

And so, with that, I will leave it to the floor, and I will allow that Minister his 20 minutes if he chooses to get up and let the people of Bermuda know that—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I will say that leader. I will leave it there.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Minister Darrell.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that while there was a time when the Honourable Member from the other side was the Shadow for the ministries that I was responsible for, I can say, Mr. Speaker, that I have never seen him get on his feet and try to waffle and complicate a simple issue so eloquently.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I would not say waffle. I would not say waffle. Remember, we are trying to be protective of—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reel it back a little bit—

The Speaker: He expressed his viewpoint and his opinion.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I will . . .

I will come back, and I will I will go back to a simple story that most of us are familiar with. And that is an issue of actually canvassing. Because if you do not canvas, you do not go out into the streets, you do not talk to individuals, then there is no way that all of us in this House can possibly be here.

Mr. Speaker, most of the time (and I think most of us will attest to this) when you are speaking to people, a lot of the times the individuals who want to talk to

you the most are the ones who are struggling the most. Many times, when you go to people, many people say: *Nope, everything's cool. If I need you, I will call you.* But the ones who are truly struggling, Mr. Speaker, [are] the ones who take up, as we say, the most of our time when we are speaking to them and canvassing.

And for a long time, Mr. Speaker, the number one issue that all of us have heard was that individuals cannot keep money in their pockets. And Mr. Speaker, when you say, *Well, these are the things that the Government has done to keep more money in your pocket.* Some of the things that they say are: *Well, that's great and we applaud you Government. But there are other factors at play that you're doing something with your right hand and on the left hand other factors are happening, and the prices are not going down. They are essentially going up.*

So, I heard the Honourable Member from the other side use this slogan in his presentation quite a bit. He kept speaking of my honourable colleague, the Minister of Home Affairs, [by saying], *I do not think that this Bill seeks what she is trying to achieve.* And the reason why I said, Mr. Speaker, when I started, that I felt that he was complicating the issue is because the individuals whom I talk to, the individuals whom I serve in constituency 15, make it very clear. The cost of goods, the cost of living, is far too expensive.

And what my colleague said earlier in her presentation was that sometimes they feel that despite everything that is being done, it does not seem like it is quite enough.

In her presentation, Mr. Speaker, my honourable colleague said, *We must do more.* And that is what we hear, Mr. Speaker, when we are communicating and we are going to the houses of the individuals who may be struggling to put food on their tables. What the Honourable [Minister], my colleague, said is that in bringing this legislation we can finally have our constituents look at us, know what we are doing, and trust that it is actually going to do what it is intended to do. We are actually going to be able, as my honourable colleague said, as she came with her bag of rice, a big bag of rice . . . be able to hold up that bag of rice and be able to verify that the measures that this Government has put in place are actually being passed on to the consumer.

This is about empowerment, Mr. Speaker, because far too many times . . . and many of us as Ministers will look into our shops and we will say: *Well, we have these policies, and we have these plans. And we are going to write these Bills. I am going to change these laws and make these amendments,* and then we run into a roadblock. So, I am glad that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs is bringing this forward so that we are empowering the Commission to be able to go around, through those roadblocks so that the objective is met. And that is simply to lower prices and allow people to live comfortably with some dignity, Mr. Speaker.

So, while I can appreciate that the Honourable Member from the other side got up and the what-if and the how-about and the maybe what-have-you and all of that, the bottom line is that the individuals whom I serve, Mr. Speaker, in Pembroke East constituency 15, want to know that if the bag of rice is \$5.00 and the Government is putting measures in place to make it cheaper, then next week the bag of rice is not going to be \$6.25. That is all that matters to them, Mr. Speaker.

And I will say this: This Government has a record of standing for the people. I do not have to go too far back because everyone knows that we have won three elections in a row. So clearly the people have a trust and an understanding that this Government will do what is in the best interest of them. Putting Bermudians first, Mr. Speaker. And when I say Bermudians, it is like: *What Bermudians? What does that mean?* It means the individuals who we serve—bottom line, point blank, period, simple.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, to take these measures and to make these changes, as we know, takes strong leadership. I commend the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs for the leadership. We have seen the videos. We have seen the consultation. We have seen it going wrong. But if she has to get to the point where additional measures have to be [taken] so that the individuals we serve can trust and verify what the Government is doing, that is strong leadership, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Honourable Member from the other side was speaking for maybe his base. Maybe.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: However—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I said maybe—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. Yes.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. The Minister is imputing improper motive. I do not accept a *maybe*.

You did not have to say it at all.

I ask that he retract it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Let me, Mr. Speaker. Let me take that off the record. Let me . . . Let me . . . You can take the *maybe* off the record. Let me make a bolder statement, Mr. Speaker.

The bolder statement is that this Government comes to create a fairer Bermuda for all. I can tell you, uncategorically, that there were no *maybes* there.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, Mr. Speaker, while my Honourable Member from the other side has come clearly with his points and . . . and . . . and the what-ifs and . . . and . . . and the what-have-you . . . did as money, I can say that what this Minister is doing with this Bill definitely is achieving what she and this Government have set out to do. And that is to lower prices in this country to make Bermuda fairer, and to work on behalf of the people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be up much longer, but I hope that the individuals who are listening today, whom I serve, will know that when I come on their doorstep this weekend, next week, the weekend after that, I can come with evidence that that, hey, that bag of rice that was \$5.00 will not be \$6.25 tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP Smith, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I would. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say I agree with the Honourable Minister's comment that . . . that—

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Linda Smith: —this is a simple issue. It is a simple issue to articulate; it is a very difficult and complicated issue to solve.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Ms. Linda Smith: This Commission and this legislation lay on board another layer of bureaucracy that costs money. And when you have commissions, when you have inspectors, when you have agencies, it brings forth a lot more expenses with respect to the administration of those, the adjudication of those, the staffing of those.

Regulation costs money. Just take a look at . . . you know, we get charged regulatory fees for our telecommunications. We get charged regulatory fees for our BELCO bill. We have a gaming commission that we all pay for somehow. And we do not seem to get any revenue from that, but that is another story.

But here we have another Commission, and we do not know what the cost of this Commission is going to be. And we do not know how much it is going to cost the community. And we do not know what the effect is going to be. And we do not know how the merchants are going to react to it. And so, there are a lot of

questions around how this is going to be implemented and what it is going to mean. And what are the after-thoughts or the after responses going to be in terms of the selections that we have, the supply chains that we have, the jobs that people may lose if the cutbacks come and they start cutting back on people?

So, I am not, you know . . . I looked at the legislation, and I am just not getting a sense of how all these things connect. And it is a very complicated topic.

Now I agree with my colleague that one thing that could be looked at (and I think that it is low-hanging fruit, quite frankly, at this point) is looking at doing something with respect to the monopolies and creating more competition. My concern with this legislation is also that instead of creating more competition and movement for entrepreneurs to maybe get into that market and create more competition, it is going to create more administration and more bureaucracy and turn people off in terms of what it is going to take to set up a business, and particularly a grocery business.

The other things that can be done that would help to reduce costs right off the bat would be things like eliminating the sugar tax, changing the timing of duty so that it is paid after sales, reducing the foreign currency purchase tax, and just reducing red tape within government itself.

But certainly, it is a monopoly situation that we have with respect to the grocery stores at the moment. And we see that happening in insurance and in other businesses that affect our cost of living. And so that would definitely be some low-hanging fruit for Government to, you know . . . for Government to tackle.

This seems very punitive. It seems very heavy-handed. It seems like it will create more issues than it will solve. And I just do not see how it all patches together to take us where we want to be. So, I have a lot of questions. They are not answered in the legislation, and I am just not seeing how this is going to work.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Thank you.

Honourable Members, before I recognise any other Member, I believe that is Opposition Senator [Tarik] Smith in the Gallery, just to acknowledge that he is present. Yes.

[Does] any other Member wish to speak?

MP Lister, you have your time on the floor.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to follow in the vein of my colleague, Minister Darrell, Mr. Speaker. I was out canvassing yesterday, and in one of the houses I stopped in I actually was there for maybe about 20, 25, 30 minutes with this constituent. And she gave a list of her complaints: health insurance, groceries, cost of living. And after she

went through it, Mr. Speaker, she asked, "What is Government going to do?"

So, Mr. Speaker, I told her. Government . . . we . . . what we are doing is reducing the duty, and also on some goods getting rid of duty altogether. That is what we can do, Mr. Speaker, to help reduce the cost of groceries in the store, especially essential items, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I would like to refer to the Budget Statement.

The Speaker: All right. [Keep it] short.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: [On] page 25, Mr. Speaker, [under] Essential Goods Duty Reduction, I quote out of it, Mr. Speaker. "To support the Affordable Bermuda Agenda, spearheaded by the Honourable Member, the Minister for Home Affairs, this Government will reduce or eliminate duty rates on a wider range of essential goods. These include everyday household hygiene and cleaning products, infant nutrition and care items, core dairy products, bakery goods, grains, pan-try staples, selected meats, and fresh produce. These are the basics that families purchase week after week, and this measure is designed to ease pressure at [the] checkout counter and make a practical difference in the cost of living for Bermudian households."

Mr. Speaker, I will go further to say that the Minister said this list has been expanded. So, this is what Government is doing.

Another situation, Mr. Speaker, this past week I had a friend (he moved out of Bermuda over 10 years ago) come back home this week. We were hanging out. He said he went to the grocery store, Mr. Speaker. He said they spent maybe a hundred dollars for five items. And he looked at me, and I said . . . *You know, unfortunately, this is the price of goods in Bermuda now since you left.* But then I said, *This is what Government is trying to do.*

The people, as Member Robinson said, the constituents, the public . . . they are calling out for something to happen. So, this is what Government is doing with our control, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we should not let perfect be the enemy of good. Well, we should not let us be afraid to try because you know it is not going to be perfect. No, Mr. Speaker, let's do what we can to help. When I go and knock on doors next week to tell the constituents that this is what we are doing, that is what they want to hear, Mr. Speaker. They do not want to hear: *Well, we can't do it because businesses, you know, they are not going to like it. Businesses, you know, there is more work for businesses to do.* Mr. Speaker, the everyday consumer does not want to hear that. They want to hear what Government is doing. What are we doing to address the cost of living, the cost of groceries, and high cost of living, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, further to that, it was raised by Member Robinson in regard to anti-merger

monopolies, but Mr. Speaker, that is a new, you know, revelation in Bermuda, maybe since COVID-19 in the last—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It has been for maybe five or six years. [INAUDIBLE] merger [INAUDIBLE].

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, that is a more recent situation where we are seeing mergers of businesses. The high cost of groceries has been going on longer than that, Mr. Speaker. So, let's address the cost of living. A by-product could be the anti-merger anti-monopoly legislation. But the high cost was happening before these mergers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and . . . and . . . you know, much has been said, and I do not want to belabour it because I think the overall point is that we are doing as Government what we can to help reduce the cost of staple goods, services, utilities, [and] things like that, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to end just on this one point, Mr. Speaker. This last month has been the [FIFA] World Cup. I know most of us up here have been watching the World Cup, you know, whether your team was in, made it to the final, or not. But [there is] one thing, Mr. Speaker, because I usually do not watch local TV channels. It is either streaming or, you know, Netflix and things like that. But what I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, is that during the commercial breaks, the hydration break, the halftime break, there is a commercial that comes on. I cannot remember the exact entity, but it is a Bermuda commercial that shows how we . . . I want to say it may be the grocers, where they show the track of when the produce is grown and purchased in California, it travels across the East Coast, then it is shipped to Bermuda. They actually went out of the way . . . not . . . they did not go into minute detail. But they actually went out of the way to sort of show the transparency of how we got our costs in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

So, I say that to say because this legislation gives powers to the Commission to find out how entities get their costs. If we as a Government are reducing duty for staple goods, why is that not being passed on to the consumer? So, this gives further investigative powers to get transparency of costs. I think that is key. It is transparency of costs. Why does a bag of rice cost six, seven, eight dollars? Let's look at what makes up that cost and how we can reduce that. And if we are reducing duty on these essential costs, we should see a reduction in the price of these items, Mr. Speaker.

So again, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments. We as Government have to do, and we are employed to do, what we can to help our everyday constituents that both sides . . . We [all] know, Mr. Speaker, there are constituents that struggle. And they ask, and they call for us to do something. So, this is what

Government is doing. And I support the Minister and the team at the Ministry of Home Affairs in these efforts to reduce our cost of goods or services that [are] essential for people to survive and live in Bermuda.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to—
MP King?

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are all in agreement with the spirit and intention of the legislation. Lowering costs for families? Absolutely. We all recognise that persons in this community are struggling just to feed themselves. The question is whether or not this legislation, as we are being asked to pass, is going to achieve the intended goal. I am fearful that it will not, not for lack of will but because of the way it is structured.

When a person goes into a grocery store, what they are faced with is many choices in terms of the name brands and other things. Perhaps if we adopted the same approach as pharmacies—prior to them becoming monopolies—where you can buy a generic version that may be duty-free, then the consumer would have more choices about healthy food at an affordable price.

The other problem that consumers face, especially those on limited budgets, is when you go to pay for the item, or when the item is being displayed, you just have a barcode. You don't know how much the item actually is. So, if there was legislation, perhaps, or an amendment, or some other mechanism in place where a person can see how much the item is going to cost before they get to the checkout and then have the embarrassment and humiliation, that might be helpful as well.

I know that some time ago there was talk about Government perhaps starting a co-op like we used to have before some of you here were alive. We used to have the co-op supermarket there on Union Street, which was where many families, mine included, used to shop because you get good quality products at a fair price. Might consideration also be given to encouraging the startup of a cooperative with agriculture, with the fishermen, with the farmers, et cetera, so that we can have food sustainability and security by promoting local cooperation in business ventures, which will help to offset the costs associated with monopoly businesses that currently exist?

As I said, we are all in agreement with the spirit and intention. What I am asking the current administration to do is to consider other ways where we can literally grow the business and make things better for all of us, not with further restrictions on the business providing services, but with an approach that is holistic and takes into consideration all variables.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Minister Adams, would you like to make a contribution?

Hon. Jache Adams: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to talk . . . I will not talk about him. There is nothing to say, but I do remember a time in a previous debate when the Honourable Member Fahy was here. And he said that they are the Opposition. Right? And so, they are not here to pat us on the back on every particular matter. And so, it is interesting that I think we understand the overall intent. But what I can also say is that I am not surprised by the Opposition that they have some level of opposition to this Bill that is being proposed—

An Hon. Member: Concern.

Hon. Jache Adams: —concern for . . .

What I am not a subscriber to, Mr. Speaker, is this level (and these are my words) of scaremongering, of the fact that, you know, with this Bill and with these pieces of legislation, all of a sudden, prices are going to rise, jobs are going to fall away. This is in my words, you know, scaremongering.

And it is interesting, because what was said earlier was the fact that there is a belief that added administration costs is a foregone conclusion, that it will be passed on to the consumer. Yet [you] have an opposition to a government that says, *If we provide duty relief for you, Mr. Business owner, we are putting policies in place to help ensure that those savings are passed on to the consumer.*

And so, Mr. Speaker, I then run into a space where I have heard Minister Darrell and Junior Minister Lister [III] talk about canvassing and the things that they hear when they are out on the doorsteps about the cost of living and shopping. But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is I see it myself. I do not even have to canvass to hear about the cost of grocery stores. Listen, every Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, I take my daughter and myself, and we typically go to the grocery store. And we—

An Hon. Member: Did you go on discount day?

Hon. Jache Adams: I missed it. I missed the discount day.

But every Tuesday, that is our day. She and I go up and down these aisles, and we seemingly every week put the same set of goods in the cart. You see? And I say this because she has to have her popsicles. She has to have her frozen fruit. She has to have a lemonade, her snacks, her cereal. And so, every week we pretty much put the same things . . . every . . . pretty much put the same things. And I know that I am no different from any other Bermudian. [We] sort of have our weekly traditions of what we do. And because of that, trust me when I tell you, I do not need any report to tell me that the cost of living is going up.

I see it every week at the grocery store. I get it when I get my BELCO bills. I even get it every once in a while when I try to do repairs on my home. It is going up.

So now, I also want to take this opportunity to say that the cost of living is not a recent issue. The cost of living in Bermuda is not a recent issue. The cost of living certainly did not come as a result of this Administration, nor would I say [it] is the result of the previous Administration. In fact, I remember quite clearly the Bermuda Industrial Union has been talking about the cost of living since the 1960s. But that is why I believe this Bill matters.

And so, I think the Minister quite rightly said that this will not solve everything overnight. This is no silver bullet. Truthfully, if it were easy, if it were an easy fix, somebody would have fixed it and figured it out a long time ago. But this Bill gives the country and its residents better tools to understand why prices are rising, gives them the tools to improve transparency. It gives them the tools to strengthen accountability where it matters most.

Mr. Speaker, when prices increase, consumers deserve to know why. And equally as important, they deserve to know that at the very least someone is asking why. And when Government provides duty relief to help families, those families deserve to know that that benefit reaches their pockets and [does] not improve the bottom lines of those businesses. That is what we are talking about here. That is the type of accountability that this Bill is designed to strengthen.

For example, when the Government reduces or eliminates import duty on items to help young families with the cost of raising children, naturally parents would expect to see lower prices when they walk into the store. But if that duty reduction never reaches the checkout, then the policy has not achieved its overall purpose.

So, what I am pleased to see with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it gives the Cost of Living Commission stronger powers. It gives them teeth, and I can attest that that is something that the Cost of Living Commission has been asking for for quite some time—the ability to examine whether those savings are actually being passed on to consumers. I think we are all in agreement with this.

Mr. Speaker, another feature of this Bill is that it expands the public price database. Now that may seem technical, but the idea is actually very simple. The more information consumers have, the better decisions they can make. And so, I wanted to also now take this opportunity to remind Members and the public of the Government's commitment in our 2025 election platform to launch a digital grocery price tracker to provide price comparisons of essential goods across major supermarkets promoting pricing transparency.

So, what we are getting towards and leading towards is yet another fulfilled Progressive Labour Party commitment. If a family can compare prices

before spending their hard-earned money, we believe that is a good thing. If they can better understand the fees and the surcharges and the service plans, that is a good thing. And if greater transparency encourages businesses to compete on price, as far as we are concerned as representatives of the people, that is also a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that every dollar matters. It matters to the young family buying groceries. It matters to the seniors on fixed incomes. It matters to the single parent balancing one bill against another. Again, that is why this Bill is important. That is why this Bill matters. They may not grab the headlines, but it strengthens the framework that helps Government understand why prices are rising, monitoring what is happening in the marketplace, and ensuring that consumers are treated fairly.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will simply close with this and say that the people of Bermuda work hard for every dollar that they earn. They deserve confidence that this Government is asking the right questions and is working towards building a fairer marketplace. And they deserve confidence that when action is taken to reduce the cost of living, those benefits are reaching the people they were intended to help.

And so, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this Bill, and I encourage Honourable Members to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP DeCouto, would you like to make a contribution?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good evening, Mr. Speaker, and good evening to the listening audience.

I appreciated the remarks of the previous speaker because, you know, he acknowledged that all of us here . . . all of us here support *What can we do to reduce the cost of living?*

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Uh-huh.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know that we are all on the streets and knocking on the doors, and we are meeting people, and we are all intimately aware of the issues facing Bermudian people. So, I was glad to hear that, because I know that sometimes there are Members on the other side who like to insinuate that they alone . . . *they alone*, Mr. Speaker, have constituents who can't buy groceries. And *they alone* have constituents who would think about leaving the country. But no; it is in all of the constituencies. Let's just start with that.

And you know, we have several crises here, Mr. Speaker. Four I think of. We have the education crisis. We have the health care crisis. We have the housing crisis. And we have the cost-of-living crisis.

And cost of living is really two different things. It is how much do things actually cost in the shop, and it is what do you have in your pocket. So, when you talk about how do I improve the cost-of-living situation for somebody, you have got a couple of levers. This Bill, and, in my view many of this Government's philosophies, are the first lever, which is how do we, like, try to chip away at the price at the shop? I am not necessarily opposed to that totally, per se. But I am going to get into why I don't support this Bill.

Of course, the other approach is how do we grow the amount that is in people's pockets. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the local economy, from all of the statistics, is flat. But the international business economy is growing. And we have heard a couple of times—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, maybe not for Island Construction, Mr. Speaker, because maybe they will get some government contracts. I don't know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But we know, Mr. Speaker, that we hear about—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —the Two—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We go about the—

The Speaker: You know, we were trying not to make personal comments back and forth because they lead us down a road.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I am asking you not to take that tone.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, you are right.

The Speaker: Because you know where it is going to go. We had a good afternoon. Let's not lead us down the wrong way, please.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Let me retract that comment—

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —about a specific business—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —because, of course, it's probably not appropriate to get into that level of—

The Speaker: Yes, you have got to try pull back. You have got to pull back. So,—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —granularity up here.

The Speaker: You don't have to work up—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I do—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He should apologise.

The Speaker: He is withdrawing his—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He is withdrawing the statement. He is withdrawing the statement, and I am asking him to go in a different vein.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I was talking about—

The Speaker: Now, the statement has been withdrawn.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —the Two Bermudas, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: You see, he still hasn't apologised.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Two Bermudas. And the reason is . . . let's admit it: There are people working in a kind of parallel economy here where they . . . the cost of living is like a discussion topic. And there are people for whom the cost of living is like, *What do I have to take out of my cart today? When I go to the pharmacy, what do I not get?*

So, I say all this to say that we really, really are all on board on the same . . . the same pitch here. And I talked about . . . we talk to lots of different people when we canvass. And some of those people are not that sensitive on the cost of living. Some are struggling hand-to-mouth. And some people are businesspeople. They are entrepreneurs; they are running Bermudian businesses, Mr. Speaker. And frankly, they have their own complaints as well. And a big struggle they have is the cost of doing business

They want to deliver quality goods and services to the Bermudian people. They want to build a sustainable business to support their families. They want to be part of making Bermudian society better. And they struggle with red tape. They struggle with roadblocks put in their way from Government.

You know, I . . . the Minister for Home Affairs used the phrase *trust but verify*.

Several Hon. Members: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: There are a lot of people out there, Mr. Speaker, who do not trust this Government.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: That is the reality. How do I know that?

[Inaudible interjections and general uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, let me rephrase that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: My experience is, especially people who are trying to do business, . . . they don't feel they can count on the Government to work efficiently and effectively for them. They find things put in their way. So, I found that interesting—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motives]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I believe the—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Intentionally—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —Shadow Minister is deliberately imputing improper motives on the Government.

I believe the record of this Government speaks for itself with regard to . . . and one of the best examples is the Fairmont Southampton Princess that will be open soon. If businesses didn't have confidence in this country (right?) they wouldn't be doing what they are doing at Elbow Beach, at The Loren. And if they didn't have confidence in this Government, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous Government that reversed a contract . . . we . . .

An Hon. Member: This isn't a point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —respected the airport and the hotel deals. Notwithstanding the concern we raised. So, I think it is very disingenuous of them.

The Speaker: But what he was . . . what I was hoping you got to would have been a real point of order.

What you are expressing was your viewpoint versus his viewpoint. He said that *in his opinion* . . . he didn't state a fact. He didn't misuse a fact. He said *in his opinion*, this is what he saw, and when he talks to businesspeople. That was . . . I am not in that conversation with him. I didn't have the conversation with him, so we can't . . . If he had taken facts and twisted facts around, that is a different story. But he spoke to when he speaks to the businesspeople.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

I might just make a little clarification. I actually didn't specify *businesspeople*, but there are people doing business . . . that could be a man on a bike with a bucket who is a plasterer. That could be a water truck driver—and I am going to get to that, Mr. Speaker. That could be someone trying to operate a food stall. And actually, that is primarily who I am talking about.

But I am glad the Member mentioned the hotel. Look, let's get down to brass tacks, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot of stuff in this Bill about transparency, providing information to people. That is great. You know, we could quibble about some details around that, but it is really second-order, because the main issue with this Bill is it creates price controls. No, ifs ands or buts.

The Minister can tell a business if it is allowed to raise its price or not, and how much. That is a price control. And anyone here who knows anything about what's going on down in Cuba, who knows what has been going down in Venezuela—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and other of these countries where they are running price controls, knows what is going on down there. The shelves are empty. And if the Minister doesn't understand that I invite her to go up to the Southampton Princess project and speak to those Cubans working up there.

An Hon. Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

An Hon. Member: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is making people believe that the products on the shelves in Cuba and Venezuela have nothing to do with the sanctions, the international sanctions, that are on that country due to conflict.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Not because of price controls.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The shortage does . . . has been impacted by the blockage. That is a given.
But go ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and there are many other examples around the world where price controls create shortage—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And let me actually give you another example about that.

The Minister of Home Affairs (a couple of Ministers spoke over there) tried to compare this price control regulation to industries such as insurance and electricity. Right, Mr. Speaker?

Now, interestingly, as you know, we have called for more regulation of the insurance industry in Bermuda including setting . . . not setting, having insurers' price rate changes reviewed. And I am going to explain to you why that is different from what is going on here.

So, number one, we have a monopoly situation here (basically) with the insurers. Right? Number two, it is a very technical area, but we have a very good regulator in the BMA, full of technical, competent people who understand the industry. Number three, there are well-understood processes internationally because this happens in most countries. There is a regulation of the insurance rate changes of how insurers can apply to raise the prices (I guess they can apply to lower them, too—although I am sure that is generally approved.), and the kind of information that they have to provide and that the people regulating them take into account. And sometimes the prices go up.

Now what happens . . . what happens when the regulators don't let prices go up when they need to go up? For those of you who are not familiar, this is what was happening in California. The major insurers all pulled out of certain classes of business. People could not buy wildfire insurance. There are areas where people cannot buy flood insurance. There are areas where people cannot buy earthquake insurance. And then the government has to step in and become the insurer.

So that is an example of where, when the regulators do not allow the appropriate price to be set, you have a shortage. So, I don't think the Minister's example of comparing this to things like insurance regulators and so forth is the right one, because her Ministry does not have the capacity and the kinds of experts and the whole infrastructure set up in the way that the BMA would have.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The BMA—which has hundreds of people hired internationally from around the world with deep technical experience and qualifications and actuarial work in insurance and so forth . . . and one of my prior comments actually spoke about what would it need to get this kind of thing set up. Because under this legislation the Minister determines whether a business can raise a price, if it feels it needs to raise the price, or not.

So, I guess I have a big question there. And I know we all would love to know: How will the Minister make that determination? Who will support her? Where will that information come from? (Right?) How will they guide that discussion process? What will the appeals process be? And so forth. Okay?

So, I have been talking about price controls.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Water truckers. I talked about the small businessperson, Mr. Speaker. If you are a water trucker out there your price will be subject to this, potentially. So, how about that? You are going to tell them how much to charge to deliver a load of water. I mean, I get the point. Water is an essential commodity. But there are a lot of things going on with the guy's truck, or the lady's truck. The maintenance of the truck, the cost of fuel, where they get the water from, and so forth. So, how is that going to go down with the water truckers, Mr. Speaker?

Now, I want to go back to the trust topic because as I said, in my view, a lot of people I speak with don't . . . are not trusting this Government—especially people in small business. And we had the CIT debate earlier. And I don't want to reflect on that, per se, but I want to use, as an example, where we in the Opposition are actually really pleased with how the Government has been consulting with the experts in the business, that whole sector, in a way that what comes out is well-crafted and has a lot of good feedback into it.

And some feedback that we have from various sectors that may be impacted by this legislation, which showed up a week ago, Mr. Speaker,—one week—is that this was like out of left field. This was not something they saw coming.

And let me talk about the price control aspect. And if you don't mind, my colleague, MP Robinson, did talk about it. But if you allow me to maybe quote from something from the ³[24] June 2020 Senate Hansard.

The Speaker: Brief quote.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Senator [Anthony] Richardson, "To clarify [that], it is not at all the role of the commission for price control—not at all."

³ [Official Hansard Report](#), 24 June 2020, p. 992

And then a second quote, "It is not a role at all. Price control is not a function at all of the Cost of Living Commission."

All right, well the Minister will probably say *No, the Commission won't. I am going to set the prices*. So maybe she can explain to us how that is going to work.

So, when we talk about the cost of doing business (right?) we want . . . we, in the OBA, we are looking for growth. Because if you want to take . . . cut some of the taxes, cut the duty . . . in many areas we want to see that done. But we have to admit that after a certain point in time it becomes diminishing returns. And that is what is going on with those approaches by this Government now.

What is not going on is finding ways to encourage growth of the economy, to put more money into people's pockets, and growth, and supporting of local business. In my opinion, and I don't want to get into debate on the Economic Development Strategy, but the statistics show that the local economy—the Government's own statistics—is essentially running flat. Okay? So, we had that.

And my colleague, [MP] Linda Smith, talked about some stuff the OBA would do that we think can address costs. And she talked about the sugar tax. I mean that could be done. I tell you what. Bring that on September [4th], Mr. Speaker. We are all for it.

We talked about ways to address the whole customs duty process for retailers. You know, simplify it. Take it away. Let them pay it after the fact, because cash flow is a really important thing for doing business. And the foreign currency purchase tax. Another idea that can support retailers in reducing costs is . . . there are retailers that supply goods that they essentially manufacture on the Island. And they are in competition with overseas companies. Let's say for kitchen cabinets . . . kitchen cabinets, Mr. Speaker. That's one. Why can't they buy the plywood (or whatever) at a duty-free rate, because they are doing the work and selling a finished product here? But they have to compete with cabinets from Florida. Right?

So, those are some ideas of . . . I know those aren't necessarily about the critical goods, but we are talking about cost of living here. And so, if you need to do a renovation of a small apartment, maybe the BHC would like some low-cost Bermudian-made cabinets to fit out its kitchens, for example. And then you would have a double whammy, Mr. Speaker. You would be supporting local business and getting a good deal on that housing for important Bermudians.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we talked about . . . we have heard from some of my colleagues that, again, if they feel they are not allowed to set the prices how they need to set [them], they are going to move other levers. And we already heard about potential impacts on employment. But here is another one: If you [own] a store and you are pricing your goods and they say, *Hey this basket of goods* . . . which, by the way, we understand there could be thousands and thousands of items

that are going to be covered by these price controls. And I don't know how the Ministry is going to process all of that. You are going to raise the prices to make up your revenue on other items. So again, it is just going to leak over into the other things that people need to put into their baskets.

And then if they do have to cut the money that they are spending locally on suppliers or employees or whatever, that is going to be a further reduction of local economic activity, Mr. Speaker.

So again, as my colleagues have said, and as I have mentioned here, we are all on board with making the cost-of-living crisis better for Bermuda. But we offer a fundamentally different approach which, instead of trying to control and getting in the way of business, we want to enable businesses to be more creative. We want to get the red tape out of the way. We want to reduce the costs on them that they can then pass on to their customers. And I talked about why we like the transparency aspects of this. We want to get the local economy growing to put more money into people's pockets.

We have a lot of concerns about this Bill that I have mentioned and my colleagues have mentioned.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

MP Lawrence Scott, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, listening to the comments from the Opposition has made me think of what they call survivor's paradox. And I am glad that you asked what survivor's paradox is, Mr. Speaker, so that I could explain it not just to you but to the—

The Speaker: Go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —to the listening audience as well.

So, survivor's paradox comes from the 1940s. Mr. Abraham Wald, a mathematician, was part of a statistical research group. And they were tasked with trying to determine where to reinforce the bombers, the aircraft that were dropping the bombs in the war, so that they could increase the survivability of aircraft coming back. And so therefore they could decrease the number of casualties and losses that the American forces were taking.

And Mr. Wald realised a fundamental flaw in what they were doing. They were looking at the aircraft that had returned from behind enemy lines. They were looking at aircraft that were able to return home and looking at where they had been shot and where they had been penetrated by ammunition. And they were starting to reinforce those areas. And Mr. Wald said, *Well, hold on. If the aircraft has taken damage in these*

areas and returned home, then do these areas really need to be reinforced? We should really be looking at the aircraft that do not make it home and seeing what actually brought that aircraft down.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I shared that because it seems as though the Opposition is focused on having the survivor's paradox. They are looking at what exists right now, right here, and not looking at what could be, what should be, looking at new ways to do things. And there is a common saying *If you keep doing what you have been doing, you are going to keep getting what you have been getting.*

And if you look in *Webster's Dictionary*, there are two words in the English language that have the exact same meaning. It is called insanity and stupidity, to repeat the same action and expect a different result. And so the Government is neither insane nor stupid. And so, therefore, we are looking at different ways of doing things.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the current supply chain . . . And my Honourable Junior Minister spoke about the commercial that is on the TV where they show a head of lettuce that [comes] from California and is in refrigerated trucks and gets to New York and then gets the shipping route over to Bermuda, and all these added-on fees help to stimulate the economy and keep people in jobs and feed chefs and families. But, Mr. Speaker, what they do not tell you is that California is 3,080, 3,090 miles away. Is there no closer place to get a head of lettuce, Mr. Speaker? Could we not go down to a place in . . . I know there is going to be an uproar when I use this word because it seems to be the forbidden word over in the Opposition—the C word.

Could there not be a place in CARICOM, a country that is one of the CARICOM members, where we could actually source goods and agriculture and meats and other light manufactured items from? Because CARICOM is only 1,500 miles away, Mr. Speaker. Half the distance. Which would actually mean that, arguably, it should be half the price to get here. That means we are reducing what is called the middle mile.

But what we have also understood and what the Government understands is that the current local supply chain—and that is what I will call them, the local supply chain—decision-makers have fought against making new decisions. They spent so much time building their relationships where they are now that they do not want to have to build new relationships. They do not want to have to look in new ways. They want to continue to do what they have been doing so that they can just pass on the expense to the consumer and then blame the Government.

And how do I know that they want to do what they have been doing and then blame the Government? Because the Government gave them a test.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: So, we get . . . we put . . . we passed the sugar tax, and every price went up in the country. But we have also passed duty relief, Mr. Speaker. And yet, we have not seen any dramatic or significant change in price to reflect the duty relief that they have gotten, which would reflect trickle-down economics, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Opposition has been talking about, trickle-down economics, which was a philosophy that was used in the 1930s—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Member, enthusiastic though he may be, is misleading the House. No one over here has talked about trickle-down economics.

And while I am on my feet, Halifax is half the distance. It is 871 miles.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I do not know that they can grow lettuce in Halifax, but that is a different story.

But Mr. Speaker, trickle-down economics, let me explain. If the Honourable Member would have let me explain—

The Speaker: His point of order is that they are not referring to trickle-down economics.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Oh, no, well [it was] the concept. They might not have used the term, but they are saying if the Government was able to do things that helped reduce the price to the business owners, they could pass—

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. No one on this side of the aisle is advocating trickle-down economics. And I am well aware of what it means.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Remember, we clarified that the Member is not . . . We said what you were referring to, but he just wants to give an explanation for it.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: The concept that I have heard and the way that I have interpreted what the Honourable Members on the other side have said, talking about if the Government, was to find ways to be able to reduce the cost of living for . . . No, not the cost of living, but the cost of doing business for the business owners

here in Bermuda. They could then pass that on to the consumer. That is my interpretation, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Member is again misleading the House. The examples on how to lower costs that were given by this side include getting rid of the sugar tax. That is not in any way trickle-down economics.

Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, they are saying that if we reduce . . . if we removed the tax they would pass that savings on to the customer. That is exactly what I just explained, Mr. Speaker.

That is exactly what I just explained, that if businesses got their operating costs reduced, they would pass it on to the customer. And then I also showed where that has actually happened where the Government ended up doing their part of the deal, removing the duties, but that was not passed on to the customer. But I will move on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on to looking at things in a new light because, despite the fact that we have Bermuda-based companies like [the] bank of Butterfield, Coralisle Group Ltd., otherwise known as CG (formerly known as Gibbons Company), and Deloitte, who are Bermuda-based companies that do business in CARICOM, and in CARICOM regions, the Opposition would tell you that, no, we should not go down there. There is nothing to be had down there, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I am [afraid] the exuberant MP is again misleading the House. No one has said we should not go down there. Indeed, examples have been given of businesses that are already there.

Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I am glad he was listening because I did give the examples of the businesses that were already down there, and doing very well. And so therefore, the Government . . . Why would the Government not take that example, take a page out of their book, and go down there and build stronger ties there so that we could turn them into trade routes, which means that we can bring in products for lower prices and thus help reduce the cost of living?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that Honourable Members on the other side said that I could put that on my plane.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Let's not try to make it personal even in a light manner because it may go the wrong way.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, what I want to show is that there is \$11 billion of exports coming from the CARICOM region going to the United States every year.

Bermuda averages roughly about a billion dollars of imports from the United States to Bermuda. Are you not telling me that the current local supply chain cannot find a way to tap into an \$11 billion export industry? And that they cannot find a way to put a ship on from the CARICOM or Caribbean region to Bermuda in order to help bring down the cost of living?

And so, because they have had ample opportunity, ample time, the Government is now saying that if you will not do it on your own, we are going to *encourage* you to do it. We are going to *motivate* you to do it.

And Members on the other side want to say the word *force*. But then, Mr. Speaker, if the Government sat back and did nothing, the Members on the other side would say you should do something. And so now that we are doing something, they are saying that it is not the right thing to do. But when they had the opportunity, they did nothing.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

[Cross talk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr.—

The Speaker: Okay. We will say that is your opinion that they have done nothing, but—

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: That is my opinion. But also Mr. Speaker, I notice . . . I—

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE] jumping up and down.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr. Speaker, the point that I am getting at is that if we continue to suffer from survivor's paradox, we will continue to have the increase in the cost of living because it is obvious that the private sector is going to focus on their bottom line. And I am not insinuating or implying that there is anything wrong with that. Business is business. But the Government's business is to look at the quality of life of those persons that live in this country and to create an environment where that quality of life can be achieved by everyone. And so, therefore, what we have to do is do

something different. Look at other avenues. Look at other levers. Make the tough decisions.

Mr. Speaker, one piece of advice that my father gave me before I got into politics in 2012, he said, *You know that not everyone is going to like you for the decisions that you have to make.* And I responded to him saying that an ice cream salesman has enemies because there are those that are lactose intolerant. There are those that don't like certain flavours. So, if people cannot be happy with an ice cream salesman, then I am fine with people not liking me as a politician when we are making the decisions that need to be made so that they can have a better choice, that they can have a better life. They can have better quality of life at that, Mr. Speaker.

And so, therefore, it is interesting that there was a Member on the other side that used a word earlier today called *propaganda*. And now we see it in action because they try to elicit an emotional response—

An Hon. Member: That's what you did.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —when the Government is making logical decisions. The Government is making decisions that are based in data, that are based in numbers, statistics. And the Honourable Member who has never been in Government, MP King, is saying that the Government does not do stuff on statistics or data. So, he would not know because has not been on this side yet.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Because he . . . No, no. I will not go there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to make it personal.

The Speaker: Don't do that.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr. Speaker, in closing—

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —the Government is looking to do things different. And sometimes when you do things different it is a little scary, Mr. Speaker, because there is part of the unknown. But just understand that the Government has done its due diligence. The Government has done its research. The Government has looked at the playbook that the private sector has been using for decades now of doing business outside of Bermuda. And what we have noticed is that there sometimes has to be a little nudge, motivation, inspiration to be able to change those prices, to get the desired result, which is a better quality of life for all persons that call this wonderful Island home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Before I call on any other Member, I would just like to acknowledge our visitors in the Gallery. We have got some visitors from overseas here visiting. And one is a young man who has just recently qualified for the European Junior Championship in Spain in golf and is mentored by MP Swan.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: He is here visiting with his father, so we like to just acknowledge both by you. And it is . . . Derek [PHONETIC] is the father, and Therese [PHONETIC] is the son? Yes. Okay.

So welcome to Bermuda. And we trust you will enjoy yourself here, and you [will] get a lot of new tips from your mentor while you are in his presence. Thank you.

[Does] any other Member wish to make a comment at this time?

MP Cannonier?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have guests. And I have already had my recess, so I will be on my good behaviour.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You know, I appreciate the last speaker bringing up the fact that we do need to start looking at other opportunities and avenues of bringing in goods into Bermuda. I have been on that bandwagon for quite some time now, mentioned that in the House here [on] several occasions. Even through COVID-19 we realised that there were opportunities abroad when we had to, by force, purchase goods from other jurisdictions.

And I have had a challenge with the established businesses for many years, in my own business and the likes, in finding out the same product that I am buying locally, which is produced actually in Bermuda . . . to go to another country and find out that the same product that I am paying \$19 for a case is being sold down in the islands for \$9 a case. And they are making money.

So [it is] rather interesting, this whole journey that I have had in the wholesale and retail business. But it is not as easy as it appears, that you just open up a store and you sell something. One of the intricacies now of doing business is that we can tell you exactly on the shelf what it costs for any item to be on that shelf. And so, the calculation goes in, which includes electricity, commissions, all kinds of things when you are buying from a wholesaler under different circumstances, on how we actually price out that product.

And one of the first things that I found out many moons ago was that I could sell . . . And I will just use this as an example. I could sell Fanta, an orange soda in Collector's Hill, just gobbles of it. But I could not sell pineapple there. But in town, just 15 minutes away, everyone wanted pineapple soda as opposed to the orange soda. The challenge I had was the city per square foot, costs me more than Collector's Hill per square foot.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And so that product, I had to figure out, *Okay, well, how do I price this now?* And so, these are some of the challenges that wholesalers, retailers have. And to be frank, I am not talking about the big boys. I am talking about someone like myself who came up grassroots and started my own business, trying to figure out, how do I get the pricing right?

So, I understand the fact that this whole idea of the survivor paradox, and the likes, that he mentioned [from the] 1940s. But what I will say is this, and I was glad that he brought up this whole thing about the survivor paradox. I had no idea he was going to say it. In the 1940s, that was one of the last times that you actually saw the United States impose pricing control.

An Hon. Member: Incorrect.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: One of the last times, I said. It is several times that it was done. One of the last times. And it came in because of war. And the actual Minister did speak about what was going on at the time, war planes and the like. But one of the reasons why it was imposed was because it was wartime. And you would understand why that would be the reason to impose a price control into the picture.

Now, if I were to say outright that this Bill is talking about price control, there might be some argument to say that, *well, not exactly, we are trying to regulate the industry*, right?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I hope . . . oh boy, do not get too excited yet.

[Desk thumping and Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Do not get too excited yet.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, they are taking my time away, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That little time; I must add a little benefit for the both of you—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, you better give me more time; they are taking my time away now.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I understand the complexity of what we are dealing with. But I also understand the complexity of trying to survive in a Bermuda market, being an entrepreneur in the retail business, in the grocery business, and the like. It is a very, very difficult formula to balance. And most of the businesses that we are talking about that this Bill will affect are 100 per cent Bermudian-employed. And so, I have to balance out, just like everyone else, my reinvestment into the property when I start looking at the complexities on how I price goods.

So, for the most part, myself having actually worked in a place like, well, back then it was called . . . I am trying to remember the name of it . . . but anyhow it owned The MarketPlace—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, they had an umbrella company that owned The MarketPlace cycle shops, and all of them. I am trying to remember the name of it. It escapes me right now.

But I had the opportunity to understand the intricacies of how The MarketPlace was doing its pricing. And at the time that I came in, they were in huge debt. So they were trying to work themselves out of debt. And so, they were looking for, *how do we do a good thing?*

And one of the things that came out of it was this whole idea of price-right goods. Right? We are going to bring them in less, at better pricing. But where is it now? And the challenge was, we had difficulty in getting people to recognise that this is the same peas and carrots that you are getting from Dole. But people were not buying it, which is a challenge, because it is a mindset. Right? It is a mindset that we are trying to work with here.

And so, I get the idea that we need to broaden our purchasing of goods. But opportunity . . . you create change, quite frankly, through opportunity. You do not create change by closing up businesses.

Now, why am I saying that? I will say it this way. If we start looking at price control of a certain sector of goods, the mindset of any wholesaler or retailer is, *Okay, all right, I am restricted here with this certain number of goods. But how does that affect the rest of what I am actually selling and doing?* And what I am fearful of in this particular case (it has not happened, but what I am fearful of) is in the idea of controlling a certain sector of goods and creating administration around how we do that. What is going to happen is, what grocery stores and other retailers do is, they have sales all the time. And the idea of the sale is to bring more customers in for a particular product.

But if I am restricted on a certain number of goods, I am tempted now to say, *Well, I am not going to do those sales, because everything else is going to sit at a stagnant structure of price, because I am already controlled by this other sector.* That is the logical decision-making that these retailers and these wholesalers are going to start looking at.

So, I get the need . . . what do we do? But this Bill, quite frankly, it is not really going to change in any significant form the cost of living.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It is not. It is just simply does . . . this Bill is not providing the solutions to that. It may be a step, but in the grand scheme of things, the challenge is with the step. What else are we creating as an unintended consequence?

So, we are already reducing, and the Honourable Member [who] spoke just before me mentioned about incentives and trickledown economics. Well, listen, in all sectors of Bermuda's economy we have been doing that. The Government provides discounts . . . sorry, not discounts, but rebates and the likes to business, in hopes that it creates more opportunity for Bermudians. That is why we have things for the hotels and all of these things going on. That's why we do it, because we are trying to create business. It is kind of like saying, I am going to give you this thing at a sale price.

And so, when I sell something in Hamilton, because it is a different price point, as I have mentioned before, because of the cost of commission that I have to pay in Hamilton, because it is a premium spot, I can sell broccoli there for a certain price. But down in Collector's Hill, I have got to sell another product because of the price difference between these two areas.

And what I am concerned about is, when we start looking at this, the new businesses, and as I said before, you create change through opportunity. The new small and up-and-coming entrepreneur who should be getting into the grocery market should be looking at the opportunity of buying down in the islands.

The challenge with buying down in the islands, of course, is the shipping cost. Right? Because we do not already have a natural route for shipping goods back and forth down in the islands. And one of the challenges Bermuda has at the end of the day is that we are importers. We are not exporters. And that is also . . . and I know the team knows that that creates a massive change in cost for Bermudians.

So, part of the solution is, okay, well, what are the grocers saying on how they can help in this area? And I have not heard that. I have not heard what some of these other wholesalers and retailers are saying as to what it is that they can do to help. We just have not heard what they are saying that they are going to do.

What we are hearing is that the Government says. Well, you know what, we are going to . . . these certain goods, we are going to stipulate a certain

amount of growth on that, or pricing on that, or whatever the case may be. But what are they saying? Because I know that for our family business, the whole idea is to maintain the fact that we hire 100 per cent Bermudian. And we pay good wages, just like many of these others.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I think the Member is unintentionally misleading the House.

During the . . . he said he does not know what the grocers are saying and what the grocers are doing. At the Cost of Living Summit, the grocers sat on the stage and said that they have done all that they can and these are the best prices that they can do it for.

The Speaker: They may have said. But he said he was not there, so he did not know what they said. He just said he did not know what they did.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Exactly.

The Speaker: That is all. He was not misleading the House. He just was not there.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: They are taking up my time, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, so it would be nice to hear some of the feedback—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, so it would be nice to hear some of the feedback on what . . . with this consultation, some of the things that they believe that they can do.

I recognise that back in 2012, when we spoke to especially the sector of the grocers, they were willing to work with the Government on how they could affect change within the industry. And I agree with the Honourable Member; we should be looking at where we source other things. And so, if they are not willing to source from other areas, what I am saying is that we need to create the opportunity for new grocers to come along that can do that. But it is not going to be easy. I can assure you of that.

So, with the market that we have now, what I am afraid of is, once we start putting in these controls over a certain number of products, everything else becomes static. During Cup Match you are no longer going to get that discount on soda and all of this. Those sales are gone. That is what they are going to do. And the first thing that any retailer, wholesaler looks at when

it has to be concerned about cost, unfortunately, what is the first thing they look at? Labour, right? It is people. And that is not what we want to affect.

The unintended consequence as we move forward with this here—and I am highlighting this, hopefully, because I would like for the Minister and the Government to start looking at and talking to the wholesalers and retailers about this—is, *Listen, how do we also keep jobs on the table with this kind of legislation?* Rather than using cutting costs by, first thing we are going to do is cut labour. Because most of these places pay pretty good. You know, they pay fairly decent to have people working in their operations. The unintended consequence from that is less investment back into the product.

But what will happen is the small guy on the corner, which is what we are seeing, the small guy who gets a startup, he has to also comply with this. He does not get a heads-up. He also has to comply with this here. And so, usually, the young entrepreneur who probably is more of a persuasion of mine in some of these areas, he is already on the back foot because he has got to do all kinds of administration to satisfy what we have in front of us. He is on the back foot.

Who can afford to do this? The big boys. And the large chain that is out there . . . I can assure you that when the other small guys are saying this is not worth it. They have the capacity to gobble up everyone else, and they will become a monopoly. And so, I am flagging this because these are some of the things that we need to look at.

I have heard some good things when I heard the different speakers talking about the challenges that are out there. But I can assure you of this one thing, being in the industry myself. I have to make sure that I protect my employees and that they can have a place to come to work. But if, as a consequence of this, [that becomes] a challenge, what happens is I have got to let them go. And we do not want to be in that position.

I have already been complaining about the fact that we are moving back to monopolies. I have warned this Honourable House that we are on this chain of going back to monopolies. And we do not want to be in that position. I am still in the House of Assembly waiting for legislation that will bring about the changes that we want to avoid these monopolies coming in.

But I can assure you the industry and the business will work faster than the Government every single day, because they see what is coming. They understand what is coming. And they will make the move, just like I have talked about these other companies, to ensure that they get in before you do anything. So let us get some of these other pieces of legislation in place.

And then this is another thing that people are not aware of, and I want the public to be aware of this here; it is not a big secret. But when it comes to grocery stores, especially in dealing with Financial Assistance and being able to purchase goods from these places, the government will give a stipend of . . . let us just use

a broad number. Okay, I am going to give . . . we are going to give Piggly Wiggly a million dollars, right? Because people are going to come in and use their financial card to get groceries, right?

So, it is sitting in a kitty, and the grocery store pulls from that kitty as Financial Assistance people come in and get it. What I want us to work on is getting people to understand that there should not be a stigma around being able to go in and get the allotment for these monies. Because I can tell you for a fact that at the end of the year, with that million dollars I am using this as a general figure (right?), a million dollars that is allotted to the grocery stores, they wound up having to give money back to the government because it was not used up.

Now that is something that I believe that we should be working on. So, if they are giving back a quarter of a million dollars, think of how many grocery bags that fills up. And so, we could be feeding a lot more people with that, but guess what? We are not. It is not being used.

And so, there are other avenues and opportunities that we need to take a hold of. If we continue down this road, I am very fearful that we are going to wind up back with monopolies. And I do not want to be in the House saying, like I did with other industries, *Well, I said it was coming.* It is coming. Because I hate to use the name, but Piggly Wiggly is going to gobble up everybody else. They are going to. Right? They have already purchased buildings all around here. They are going to gobble it up. So, we have got to figure out where that balance is.

But I want everyone to walk away with this. The opportunity lies . . . the change lies in opportunity. Why are you wasting your time (to me) with these guys when you can be putting money behind new entrepreneurs, figuring out a new way to get products from other places that can bring about real change. And I can continue to buy my Waitrose chocolate that tastes just as good as the Cadbury. I stopped buying it (Cadbury) because I now know that Waitrose tastes better and it is cheaper.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Now, there are other places that we can get them at. Down at—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Supermart on Front Street.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Supermart on Front Street. I love that Waitrose stuff, mate.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Waitrose stuff is great. Right? But guess what? Who bought them up?

An Hon. Member: Piggly Wiggly.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly gobbled them up.

I am telling you, it is coming. I am letting you know that with this,—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with this particular Bill, if you do not think that they are looking at it. They might be saying to you guys in your face, *Well, yes, you know, yes, you should not do this, and you should not do that.* And listen, I believe that they want competition, right? I will put it to you this way. The question was asked to me in a forum of all these wholesalers and retailers, I think it was about 700 of us, *Mr. Cannonier* (and it was a trick question), *if you were to open up a new business, would you open it up where it is new territory and you have a fresh start, and you can build something that you want? Or would you prefer to be where some of the other cats are? They are already established.* There are no ducks to shoot in the desert. There is nobody there. I am going to shoot . . . I want to go after the ducks that are already going to all these other places.

Now, I am going to tell you this. Tessera [PHONETIC] will tell you. I used that on him. When I opened up Collector's Hill, they had all the business because Collector's Hill was closed for renovations a long time. Tessera, he knows, he's my buddy. He had all the business. I was like, *Oh, okay, I am going to go on the south side of him and I am going to take that business.* Yes, and I aggressively went in it through sales to create opportunity. If we take away the opportunity for these retailers and wholesalers to have sales, then it is a wrap. It is a wrap. And we will have monopolies. And I do not want that.

So, I flag that up because it is a major, major concern that this is coming, and the fastest way to it is price control.

But I do understand what the Government is attempting to do here. Right? Because the cost of living is through the roof. But guess what? This Bill is not addressing, really at the end of the day. It says cost of living. Guess what? This is not going to address cost of living in any significant way. Because when the US and other markets, the cost of goods goes up by 30 per cent, 30 per cent and some things more, you cannot control it.

But what you can do is create new opportunities for entrepreneurs, and sit down with the market and say, *How do we fix this?* Because I believe that with the pressure that you are applying, they will listen. No problem if you are applying pressure; you should, you are Government. Apply the pressure.

But at the same time, do not kill off the business because they got people working. Then you are going to have more people on Financial Assistance, and probably more people because of our issues with, you know, I do not want nobody to know I am on it, where The Marketplace . . . sorry, Piggly Wiggly—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —where Piggly Wiggly is still giving back \$300,000 annually because people did not go get the groceries. That is crazy. I am telling you, these are real figures, round about, rounded off. Right?

So maybe what we should be looking at as a solution is, maybe we should be, as a Government, especially since the CIT has come into place and we are letting other people get \$20 million credits and stuff. Maybe what we should do is double the Financial Assistance for groceries because it is going to affect the people that we really need it to affect. Put the money there and encourage people. *Listen, hey, MarketPlace, you have got to clean up some of these areas.*

An Hon. Member: Piggly Wiggly.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly! *Piggly Wiggly, you have got to clean up . . .* I am going to get calls.

An Hon. Member: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am going to get phone calls.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly wants to invest, and Piggly Wiggly will invest in new products and the like. Make it feel like it is real, make it feel like it is good, that when they come in with their card they are getting good product, and they are getting something worthwhile to pay for. Right? Change the whole process. Do not make it like, *I am going to sneak in with my little card, I do not want nobody to see* or something. No, man, when they come in with the card, man, have some balloons blowing all over the place. Or whatever, *Hey, we got somebody coming in and getting our groceries.*

I will tell you a funny story, Mr. Speaker: The first job I had when I came home from school, I actually did work at—

The Speaker: Piggly Wiggly?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, it was called Clermont Investments. Right? And it was called Clermont Investments, who owned Piggly Wiggly. And I was told that I had to go out on one of these . . . I cannot remember . . . it was Christmas or whatever the case may be. Everybody had to have a Piggly Wiggly balloon. That was

my job. Propaganda. Ooh, heard that word today, propaganda, good propaganda. Everybody had a balloon; I made sure everybody had a balloon.

So, with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have created some opportunity here. I have talked about the challenges and some of the good. But what I will say is this: This, in my opinion, is a step down the wrong road. Because I know how we think. I know how we think. And we will protect that business at all costs, because it costs me a hell of a lot of money to be in business. And if I am going to allow Government to come in and take that away, it is not going to happen. Otherwise, I can just go to another country. Right? And it is cheaper.

An Hon. Member: CARICOM.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Right? The solution is, I gave the solutions. And the other side of that coin to solutions is this: We got limited numbers here. The cost is going to go up. Less people paying electricity means higher cost. More solar means those who are on the grid will have to pay more. We have got to start looking at how we get more people back into Bermuda. And guess how we do that? It is through investment. And guess what we do with investment? Piggly Wiggly puts more money back into the stores.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to have a comment at this time? MP, you exhausted everyone, that is very good. Now, Minister?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Wait, wait.

The Speaker: Oh, MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I know you are getting very excited, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I thought your Whip had covered all the bases for you that time.

Mr. Scott Pearman: You know, he has. And actually, so many people have already spoken, and I have spoken more today than I care to do.

So, I will just give a couple of very brief points in perhaps two minutes or less, I hope.

The Speaker: Two minutes or less.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, you can time me.

To my Honourable colleagues across the aisle, we agree the cost of living is too high in Bermuda. And no one doubts that groceries are too expensive. And I really would prefer if, on this topic, we could steer clear of the *you-do-not-care-about x or y*; or, *that-is-your-base*; or, *this-is-your-base*; or whatever.

What we are saying, in a nutshell, is the solution that is being proposed by this legislation is defective and will not solve the problem you are trying to solve.

Price controls do not work. Price controls lead to goods being short. Look to Venezuela, my colleagues earlier who mentioned it. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: But I would like to pick up on what Minister Adams said earlier, which is, *Well, what do you suggest?* And so, in my two minutes, here are a few:

Repeal the sugar tax.

Reduce the foreign currency purchase tax.

Grow the economy.

Increase the population. Why? So, we have more and younger people paying into our health care system, which is what we desperately need to get health care prices down.

Reduce overutilisation of medical treatments. Again, health care costs are the new mortgage of today. It is one of the cost drivers for this cost-of-living crisis that we have.

I have said this one only last week to the Honourable Minister who presented the Bill today. Amend the Regulatory Authority's powers so the Regulatory Authority can regulate BELCO and bring those prices down and take into account public need.

Duty delay. I cannot remember one of the Members on this side, I think, said, *Well, why don't we not collect duty up front? Why don't we allow businesses to delay it back?*

And finally, and I completely agree, we now have the benefit of the CIT. I do not think anyone on this side would complain if this Government gripped it and increased Financial Assistance for food for those who need it most.

And before I sit down, let me just direct one comment to the Honourable Member for CARICOM in the back. Two comments, rather.

Firstly, your Government currently has regulations through DENR that prevent the import of food from the Caribbean. So, if you would like food to come in from the Caribbean, and I am not sure that is the smartest thing with an eight-day ship, when actually the 1,500-mile example you gave to the East Coast ports, most of those are around 800 or 900 miles away, all of the East Coast seaboard, and they grow lettuce in the East Coast as well. But if you really want to try to stimulate the private sector to encourage them to bring more goods up from the Caribbean or CARICOM, or the Caribbean generally, not just CARICOM, then maybe look at the DENR rules. But I think you'll find the DENR rules are there for a reason.

So hopefully that was only two minutes, but I will just finish with: Price controls do not work.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Leader

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will also be brief on this.

I do have a question on this, because if you have a bag of goods and you make all of the duty on those items zero, is it possible for the cost of those items to go up? The cost of the item? So, when the place purchases that item from somewhere else, that duty has nothing to do with that price, because today that price could be \$10, and tomorrow that price could be \$15, and next week that price could be \$20, and the following week it could be \$30. Because we import almost everything that comes here, we have that factor to deal with. And the reason that that is important is because when you take in all of the factors that a business has to go through, you have to understand how certain decisions get made and how technology potentially will impact decisions going forward.

For any of you that have done travel and been to grocery stores in other jurisdictions, you will notice that in many places there are not a lot of people working in those stores. You check yourself out. You do your price check by yourself. Almost all of that is the customer is now working for the business. The reason I point that out is because we have started to see some self-checkout creep into Bermuda.

So, as we increase regulation and increase the red tape of the industry, do not think that it might not have a consequence that was not part of the original plan. We want to decrease the cost of groceries in the country. Across the board, everybody sees the expenses when you go to the grocery store.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are some specific things that we have to understand. During COVID-19 was one of the issues. When the products started to come in and the products were not what people in Bermuda normally were used to purchasing, they did not want to purchase them. That is one of the things that as a culture, as a country, we are going to have to change. Because the prices that go up and up and up are on some brand name items.

But there are other items that have the same quality with a name that we are not used to. And sometimes we have to decide that that is the item that we need to purchase. Because if we can have items that are at a significantly lower cost that people can afford, but they might not have the brands that we are used to having, that also has to be an option.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: We cannot immediately turn our nose up because it is not the brand that we are used to. Because the issue that we have now, it is all segments of the population that are having to look twice at certain prices for certain items.

But the flip side of that is this cost-of-living issue. Anybody that looks at international news will know that it is the same subject in other jurisdictions.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: And because we import, we are importing that problem with us. Those prices that went up in another jurisdiction end up on our shelves.

So, this is not a simple thing that we can fix by reaching in and telling a business that you cannot raise that particular price. Because Mr. Speaker, what happens is, when the person walks in to get that bag of items, and let's just call them 10 items, they might purchase five others. And if what happens is, to restrict the 10 items, the prices of the other five have gone up, then nobody won.

Because you have heard several of our Members mention the sugar tax. The reason we keep bringing it up is the unintended consequence is that the cost of bottled water went up.

I know that was not the intention. Because the truth is, for healthy living, we wanted people to drink more water and less sugary drinks. So, the last thing we would have wanted was to increase the cost of water. Because those stores—that we all agree, when we go to those stores we want those lower prices—also have to bring in those items and potentially lose lots of them through spoilage. They have to pay the cost of that. They have to take on the risk of the shipping, and maybe the loss that happens during that process.

They also have to pay the bills in this country where the prices are high. They pay for the salaries of the people that work there, which means that they also have to pay the taxes that go along with having staff.

So, what we do not want to do is say we are going to reach in and restrict here and then find out that what it has done is cause prices to actually go up in other areas, and now see that we have less people having the ability to work a second job as a cashier (because that is what people have to do to survive in this country) because that is a now a self-checkout aisle. Because if you have a self-checkout aisle, you do not have to pay for health insurance.

These are the realities of where, not just Bermuda, but the world is going.

So, when we do this, let's make sure that we are understanding every step that happens after we make a decision like the one that we are making today. We have to look at all of it. Because as our population shrinks and gets older and more people are having to use Financial Assistance to get by, it also means that there are less customers in the store. So, to pay for the overhead, they increase the prices. This is the cycle that we are in. And this restriction in this area is not going to fix those issues. Those prices will continue to climb until we actually address all of those other major issues.

So, on this side, we agree 100 per cent that the prices are too high. There has to be some kind of intervention. But what we cannot do is make an intervention that has the potential to cause these other consequences. And if we have not looked at the details, that that ripple might have caused that . . . the same way that it was not looked at when the sugar tax was implemented and it caused the price of water to go up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I heard someone mention trickle-down. But I am pretty sure I heard this Government talk about *ripple economy*. That was their word that they used during the Budget Debate, I do believe. So, the question that I have is, when they implement this, do the ripples that people are going to feel mean that the price of groceries, instead of being reduced, ended up going up? And does it mean less cashiers and more self-checkout?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

I don't believe so.

Minister, it looks like it is your show now. Get back on your feet and take us to Committee.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I do wish to acknowledge not only the robust conversation that we have had this evening, but the contributions from honourable colleagues in the House and also across the floor.

What is important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government has set out a commitment. It also is clear-eyed about its intentions. And it must also be true that multiple things can happen at the same time.

The idea that I feel invited to consider is that one legislation will consider and address everything relating to cost at one time. This is the same piece of legislation that actually was advanced in 1974. I do not know who . . . as the newest member of Parliament, I do not know who was in Government at that time. But perhaps that piece—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or a cousin, maybe not this Administration, but a distant cousin of the Opposition, would have advanced a piece of legislation that went unchanged until 2017.

And so, what we also know is true is that without vision the people perish. And so yes, successive Governments have failed to address it. And the changing of the title did not reflect what it is . . . the work of the statute and also the Commission was asked to do.

And so, in 2017, this Administration sought to begin that process. And now we are seeking to do even more.

What is also true is that we all accept, actually across the aisle, that there must be better regulation of

anti-competition and anti-trust provisions in our context. We know that we are a small Island, but that does not preclude us from making a step while likewise charting a road towards establishing that more robust framework.

And so, I have heard Members across the aisle, and also mentioned even at the top of this evening's parliamentary session, around the advocacy for regulatory clarity. How clarity, collaboration and success, one of the Honourable Members said, is what will actually be the approach that this Government ought to take. But when change is offered, immediately regulatory clarity, collaboration and success is no longer a formula that the Opposition is willing to consider. And so, I have questions around their true intent. What I know is that Bermudians every single day have, . . . oh, I am sorry.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: No, no, no, no. Do you have a point of information, Opposition Leader? Okay.

So, the regulatory clarity that I heard advocated for earlier this evening in this parliamentary session is the same level of regulatory clarity that this Bill is seeking to advance. And it is the clarity to be sure that a Government investment is actually being stewarded. How do we know? How do we know? And the Commission has also asked: *How do we know that a Government sacrifice* (to the tune of \$40 million over successive years, might I note) *has actually been appropriately passed on to the consumers?*

We also accept and began this journey a year ago, actually, with the Cost of Living Summit, which talked about and created a framework for both listening and collaboration. We said that we are not business owners. We are not the experts in the field. You are the experts. And so, therefore, help us understand your operations.

And so, we were taught and given insight around operations and supply chains and, oh, the cost of digital currency—financial transaction and credit card fees. And so, we went on a journey to also, on behalf of the operational costs that make up that cost on the shelf, we sought to explore things on behalf of the business owners.

Likewise, this morning, you would have heard we introduced never-been-contemplated relationships with US providers. This is the current status quo, current states, current supply chains. So there has not really been an effort to look beyond the current state. But again, the Government has sought to use the existing structures, use a legislation that was advanced in a previous time and space. And it has not boded well for us to be comfortable and be able to say that we are sure.

This Honourable House demands standards, reports and the like. But when it comes to this particular sector, there is a resistance to advance that same level of transparency. And I do not understand why. And I

think the public should also ask the question why that level of transparency is not being demanded.

If we know and they are doing the right thing, then you know they are doing the right thing. If we know and learn otherwise about their operational expenses, about the different things that I know for a fact, I did not appreciate that when they drive into the city they have to send two drivers. Because of the parking, one person has to get out and do the delivery, the other person has to stay in the truck. We are learning along this journey and are better informed about the different provisions.

When we understand the cost of an employee. And we understand the cost of what would be reasonably added to a good that is on the shelf along its supply chain, is that a reasonable cost? And that is what this legislation is seeking to consider and better understand through the Commission's work. It is not seeking to price control. It is the original former administration under the UBP in 1974, price control regulation.

But what you will find is a Schedule that does not list a business, unlike the electricity industry that was included in previous tablings. There is not a business in Schedule 2.

What also should be known is that this Government . . . my honourable colleague spoke to the fact that there have been multiple tests and a naïve Minister, I would argue (speaking to myself) would say, *Well, I want to also know what others may suggest to be the case.* I know there were certain things said publicly, but there has been an intentional and deliberate journey to bring both the private sector and also the public more aligned to understanding what makes up a cost.

An Honourable Member this evening talked about white labelled goods, you know, having goods that may not be brands, but they may do and taste the exact same. That is absolutely correct. And so, there is an education component that must also enter this space. And I think that, you know, the cost of living and its solution is not a one-piece of legislation, one methodology, one-step journey. It must be a collection of decisive and informed decisions. And we are seeking to be better informed. And so really that is what this legislation is seeking to advance. And to ensure that we might be deemed worthy of being prudent of the money that we are giving to, by way of duty relief, and confirm to the public and feel confident that the relief that we have given is actually reaching them.

There is an acceptance that we are . . . so I heard that there were suggestions that in other jurisdictions there is no price control as part of the remarks today, Mr. Speaker. There were clear and visible examples of other jurisdictions that have advanced this on behalf of the people of Bermuda *[sic]*. That is what they—do on behalf of their countries. And so, a country that has an advanced regulatory environment, has an advanced BMA and the like, as sectors that we would lean to as prudent and international-grade regulation

must be the same across multiple sectors. It should not just be some; it should be all. It should be all.

Just like I cannot get a parking ticket and not pay my parking ticket, there has to be an oversight. There has to be an extent to which transparency can be advanced through prudent . . . both communication and engagement for cost on behalf of those whom we have said that we are willing to serve, and we are willing to be transparent in our approach.

My honourable colleague also spoke to the fact that there was a . . . previous efforts, and previous efforts that have been done to confirm. I know the Cost of Living Commission, and the expectation that the public has of the Commission is that they will address costs. And I mentioned in the Statement, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a lack of alignment. And the Cost of Living Commission has likewise acknowledged that. But for them having oversight over the true supply chain, true cost of the goods, the very cost that would inform a decision around any sort of increases and the like, then they cannot make a decision. Having 33 essential goods is what they were invited in 2025 to steward, all while called the Cost of Living Commission. And I acknowledge that. And they acknowledge that.

And so, what this legislation is seeking to do is to say, well, what . . . it cannot just be at the retail level because what we have also tested is to understand, *Okay, do the retail and the wholesaler work together in alignment with what is on behalf of the customer?* What we also learned is that when invited to provide information without the requirement through law, there are some provisions, but in a form that says, *Share with us what can best inform the prices. Help us to understand exactly how this makes up . . .* there is resistance. And so, as recently as this week, there are letters being sent to those who just choose not to comply. And so, the question then becomes, *Is that what the Honourable Opposition wants to continue to facilitate?* Where there would not . . . there would be requests for information and just no response.

I think it would be prudent on behalf of those who we are elected to represent that we can say and be confident knowing that the cost and the transparency already in law . . . these are not, this does not even touch what we are seeking to expand today. The existing provisions in law go ignored. Members of the public will say, *Well, what is the Cost of Living Commission doing?* And the reality is they do not have the framework and mechanism in order for them to truly make decisions and weigh in relating to cost and affordability based on the stakeholders that they themselves represent.

I was intentional about selecting those who represent diversity. They did not all think the same way around the Cost of Living Commission. There are often different types of ideas being presented.

But really, what this also represents is that there must be government oversight that advocates on behalf of the people to remove abuse and/or the

tendency to abuse what should be basic human rights access, basic access to staple items, and the ability for a profit margin to increase about what we would determine our basic requirements for everyday living. It is about giving dignity to people who are finding it difficult to get chicken and bread and staple goods.

And so, but for us knowing if our efforts are truly being beneficial, then what are we even here for? It is about dignity for people so that you can know and be rest assured that those items that we have determined to be essential and those businesses that we have equally determined to be essential for living in Bermuda do not continue to erode but rather chips away at what we have defined as the Two Bermudas.

Those who cannot have access to these things, those who find it prohibitive all while the current state continues, we have failed. Anything that continues what people are complaining is not working is a failure.

And so, the resistance to change invites the question, *Well, who are we protecting?* We are not seeking to change it absolutely. We are seeking to evolve it from its current state. And that is what Honourable Members are actually invited to consider this evening. Again, it is not a schedule that includes a business or commodity at present. What it does include is a framework for better and informed decision making.

I hear Honourable Members talking about avoiding monopolies, and I think it really goes into the . . . having vision and having an understanding of true intricate dynamics of the market to be able to best make informed decisions. Also, the extent to which a hotelier and a retailer can also be a shipper, and also suggest . . . because what happens, though, having had several meetings, is that the wholesaler will blame the retailer. The retailer will blame the next person. We know that to be true. We know that to be true.

And so, the reality is we all must come together on behalf of Bermuda to ensure that the basic items are given to our public. I am not talking about alcohol and all these other things that are not determined to be essential. I am talking about the extent to which a margin and greed can be added or even suggested to be added to what we are determining to be basic and essential commodities for everyday living. Dignity and baseline goods that persons should have access to.

It becomes no longer acceptable if the Government just does one thing and cannot confirm it to be the case. We know, and we are familiar with doing so because we go to the store and we ask for a receipt. So, we are accustomed to checking what we spent, what was done. We are accustomed to that process. We are accustomed to regulation, seeing Bills. But again, in the context of anything new, there is a consistent and perpetual resistance. And the question then becomes, *Who are they actually elected to serve?*

Mr. Speaker, I think we have discussed this ad nauseum and also—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —in depth. And we can definitely go to Committee for sure, which is what I am asking to do now.

And I will look for my—

An Hon. Member: Recital.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —recital to . . . I move . . .

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill be committed, with that said.

Thank you.

The Speaker: No problem. Any objections?

None.

Deputy Speaker, will you take the Chair?

Thank you.

House in Committee at 8:48 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Chairman: Okay. Good evening, Members.

We are now in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Cost of Living Commission Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[Pause]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that clauses 1 . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Minister, if you want to move all the clauses at once, you can.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay, so just go ahead.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that clauses 1 through—

The Chairman: 20.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —20 be now—

The Chairman: Considered.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —considered.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 20 be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue.

[Pause]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman, I—

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: No, no, no, no, no, you need to read the clauses.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sorry, Madam [Chairman]. Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 provides that this Bill shall be cited as the Cost of Living Commission [Amendment] (No. 2) Act 2026.

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the Act, to revise existing defined terms and introduce new ones. The term “essential commodity” has been revised to include essential commodity goods and critical services. Essential commodity goods and critical services are, respectively, prescribed in regulations and designated by order made by the Minister. The terms “business undertaking” and “price” are revised to account for business undertakings, providing a critical service, for pricing information relevant to a critical service and tiered pricing. New term “other regulatory body” means any public authority having regulatory or consumer protection oversight and responsibility for a business undertaking or commodity. Finally, the term “related,” in relation to business undertaking, means sharing common ownership, control, directors or having an otherwise significant commercial relationship with another business undertaking. The clause also defines a prescribed category as a category of essential commodity or of business undertaking prescribed by regulations under section 10E(2).

Clause 3 amends section 2(3) of the Act to enable the Minister to appoint to the Commission an additional member with specific qualifications or [experience] for the purpose of an inquiry under section 9 just as a member may be so appointed for the purpose of an inquiry under sections 4 or 6.

Madam Chairman, clause 4 inserts a new section 2A into the Act, to require the Commission to prepare annual reports dealing with the activities of the Commission during the preceding financial year and for the Minister to lay such report before the Legislature. This clause also requires annual reports to provide the findings, analyses, or recommendations of any studies conducted by the Commission during the period and provides for the matters that may be assessed by any

studies so conducted. Those matters include commodity affordability indicators, pricing trends and market structures, the impact of duty reductions and other relief on commodities and barriers to competition. Finally, this clause enables the Commission to prepare and submit such other reports or recommendations within its remit as and when necessary.

Madam Chairman, Clause 5 inserts a new Part 1A to the Act (inclusive of new sections 2[B] [to] 2E). These sections do the following: (i) require that the Commission, when making a report, recommendation, or inquiry under the Act, consult other such regulatory [bodies] having oversight with respect to business undertaking or commodity that is the subject of such report, recommendation, or inquiry; (ii) enable the Commission to conduct market studies or other assessments in relation to essential commodities in conjunction with the relevant other regulatory bodies; (iii) protect against the disclosure of confidential information by other regulatory bodies to the Commission when being consulted by the Commission; (iv) enable the Commission to notify other regulatory bodies in the event of a contravention; and (v) provide [that] the legislation governing any other regulatory body shall prevail in the event of any conflict in law but that a requirement to cooperate with the Commission shall supersede. The result is a framework that removes duplication and closes gaps between existing regulators.

Madam Chairman, Clauses 6 and 7 amend respectively, sections 3 and 4 of the Act [to] enable prescribed categories of business undertakings and prescribed categories of commodities specified in the Second Schedule for the purpose of price increase control. Prescribed categories are made by regulations under section 10E(2). These amendments broaden the existing provisions which narrowly provide for specific business undertaking and specific [business undertakings and specific] commodities to be included. Clause 6 also restates the core discipline of Part 2, written notice of an increase and its amount must be given to the commission before it takes effect. The substituted tax includes installation charges, labour charges for repair, charges for supply apparatus and delivery charges from what counts as an increase in the price of a commodity. So, the substituted tax excludes the installation charges, labour charges for repair, charges for supply delivery or what counts as an increase in the price of a commodity.

Madam Chairman, clause 8 amends section 5 of the Act to enable any specified business undertaking aggrieved by a decision [of the Minister,] in hearing [an] appeal against the decision of the Commission under section 4, and further appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court may remit matters for further consideration by the Minister or the Commission, and the rules of the court governing appeals from any administrative tribunals apply.

Madam Chairman, clause 9 [amends] section 6 of the Act to enable the [Minister] to give notice

requiring [a] specified business undertaking or a business undertaking [falling] under a prescribed category of business [undertaking] to furnish information and keep records for the purpose of the Act.

Clause 10 amends section 7 of the Act to enable the Minister, by order subject to affirmative resolution procedure to add [to the] Second Schedule, for the purposes of price increase [control], essential commodities or prescribed categories. Such price increase control measures will apply to essential commodities or prescribed categories of essential commodities and to business undertaking or prescribed categories of business undertakings providing essential commodities where [the Minister] considers [it] necessary in the public interest. This clause also requires, when making an order under this section, that the Minister consult the Commission and stakeholders.

Madam Chairman, clause 11 inserts new section 7A into the Act to provide, with respect to the price increase control of any essential commodity or prescribed category of essential commodity in the Second Schedule, that an “increase in the price or charge” means any increase resulting in a 5 per cent or greater increase in the price or charge of the essential commodity within the same [fiscal] year. [The Minister may] by order, subject to negative resolution procedure, amend the percentage figure and in doing so must have regard to the public interest, any reports or recommendations of the Commission, [and] any joint assessments carried out by the Commission and/or its primary regulatory body.

Clause 12 amends section 8 of the Act to ensure that enforcement in relation to the price increase control measures also applies to commodities [falling] under a prescribed category in the Second Schedule and to business undertakings [falling] under a prescribed category of business.

Clause 13 amends section 9 of the Act to enable the Commission, where [so required by the Minister], to inquire into any duty reductions or any other cost reliefs given in respect of a specified commodity.

Madam Chairman, Clause 14 repeals and replaces section 10[A(1)] of the Act to enable the database . . . to also include the price of essential commodities sold at business undertakings falling under the prescribed categories . . . in the Second Schedule.

Clause 15 inserts new section 10DA into the Act to enable the Minister to designate “critical services” to certain business operations. This clause requires [the Minister,] when making such order, [to consider] the necessity of service for daily living, the availability of substitute services, and whether the cost of this service materially impacts affordability for consumers. The Minister may also have regard to instances where the same business undertaking carries out two or more of the following operations: the shipping and freight of food and other household goods to Bermuda, the wholesale importation, supply, storage, warehousing, or distribution of food and household goods to

retailers and consumers, and the retail sale of food and other household goods directly to consumers. This clause requires the Minister to consult . . . and the Commission to consult with the sector and such other regulatory bodies, if any, with respect to the service to be designated. Finally, this clause requires such designation to be made by order in the affirmative resolution for passing in this House. The order specified by the other regulatory body, if any, with whom the Commission shall consult and work for the purpose of the Act for the avoidance of doubt the new section 10DA(7) provides that nothing in the section derogates from a critical service as it relates to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 2021.

Clause 16 amends section 10E of the Act, which is the regulation-making provision for the price information monitoring [of essential commodities]. This [clause] enables the following to be prescribed in regulations: a list of essential commodities goods [and] any categories of essential commodity goods; a list of services or categories of service which may then be designated [as critical services]; and categories of business undertaking that are to furnish [price] information to the Commission.

Clause 17 inserts, Madam Chairman, section 10F [to] 10H into the Act. The new section 10F enables the Minister in consultation with the Commission in writing to have inspectors under the Consumer Protection Act in 1999 to assist the Commission in making inquiries and monitoring compliance under the Act. New section 10G provides for providing false information under the Act to an offence carrying a fine of \$2,000 on summary conviction. New section 10H enables the Minister to make regulations subject to negative resolution procedure prescribing other regulatory bodies with whom the Commission shall consult or collaborate with enabling the making of any agreements with the Commission and any such regulatory bodies can work cooperatively.

Clause 18 repeals and replaces the Second Schedule of the Act to allow for the prescribed categories and replaces the Schedule bearing the heading “Regulation of Increase [in] Price or Charge” versus “Price Control.”

Clause 19 makes consequential amendments to the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022 to distinguish under those Regulations an essential commodity from the broader category of essential commodities.

Madam Chairman, clause 20 provides for the commencement of the Bill, which shall be on such day as the Minister responsible for consumer affairs may appoint by notice published in *[The Official] Gazette*.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak on clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Madam [Chairman].

On page 7, [clause 11] [new section] 7A(2), where it says, "For the purposes of this section (as read with section 3), an increase in the price or charge . . ." that section there. I have a question on that.

I am just curious as to exactly how this is implemented. Like, how does . . . what is the mechanism? How does this work? How does the . . . if it goes up, is it the wholesalers telling you that it is going up? Or are you questioning every month whether the pricing is going up? I am just curious as to how this actually does happen. And I will ask further questions on that after that.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Shall I finish with my questions then?

The Chairman: You can.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay, yes.

So that is the first part, trying to understand that mechanism, and the timing. It will be important to understand the timing of this because in order for it to be effective you need to know this stuff as soon as possible. Right? Otherwise, it is of no use. And then it just backs up. It is just data.

So, the second part of that question then is . . . this makes a suggestion [where] in the first part it says, *this is meaning a price increase*. Okay, well, that is fine. We are trying to understand the price increase. But just because (meaning the price) the cost of something goes up, I'm trying to understand whether or not this is in relation to *cost* or this is in relation to *retail price* when it says *meaning the price increase*. Is this in relation to cost? Or is this actually retail price? Just because a product increases in cost doesn't always mean that it will increase in retail price. Right? Because the seller has different formulas for different shelves and things. Right?

And then the next part in relation to that, trying to understand this same particular cost, if we only want to know when the price increases, whether it's cost or retail, why would we not be interested if it goes down? I mean, you know, we are talking about trying to understand the market and how it works and the complexities. Why would you not want to know whether the price goes down? Because one of the greatest opportunities . . . for instance, I will use cigarettes. One of the companies that imported cigarettes before the budget came would bring in seven containers of cigarettes knowing that within the next two weeks, guess what? The price was going to go through the roof. Right? So, they made money overnight just by bringing it in before you increased the duty on the product.

So, I'm trying to make sure that if we are going to understand the increase in price, we should also understand the decrease in the cost of an item if you are really trying to understand the market. Otherwise, you are going to miss a whole bunch that is going on and the market is moving very quickly.

And now, just as an example with product, because of the new point of sale system I'm not bringing in containers [one] at a time all the time. I can bring [one] in every week. If I typically bring in four containers at the end of the month, I can bring one container this week, a container the next week, a container the next week, because I'm keeping on top of my inventory in Bermuda's limited space.

So, I want to understand the mechanism and how that all works.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30. Member, you have the floor

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Just regarding clause 11, I just wanted to ask, does this particular clause apply to specials? So, in other words, I have a special on potatoes. It drops 10 per cent. I want to now return those potatoes back to the original price which triggers a 10 per cent increase. Does this section take into account specials? And if they do get flagged . . . let us say that that triggers a 5 per cent and it comes across the Minister's desk. Does the retailer or store have to wait until . . . let's say the Minister intervenes. Or do they have to wait until they get that approval?

Are specials carved out by the Commission? Because I can see how that might be a bit finicky. It might also dissuade people from doing specials. Right? Because we all know we have, as the Minister mentioned, Wednesday and certain built-in specials that stores across the Island do. And I just want to make sure it is not a bottleneck for that.

Also, why wasn't this particular authority in clause 11 given to the Cost of Living Commission? I fear that this may cause an admin bottleneck with all retailers, or people affected by this clause, having to go through the Minister, potentially. And if there are multiple price rises which are required to be processed by the Minister and the Ministry, that could cause a huge admin bottleneck that could affect the retailer who may say, *You know what? Because I had to wait . . .* I'm not saying the Minister is slow. But if I have to wait two months, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: If I have to wait two months I may not want to do that special again because I had to

wait two months to get an approval for me to raise it over 5 per cent.

And just in clause 17, it mentions the inspectors under the Consumer Protection Act 1999. And I just wanted to ask if this enforcement addition is going to cause any additional cost to Government. And if so, what is that cost?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

At this time, there being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman

I do thank the Honourable Members for their questions. If I might begin with the Honourable Member from constituency . . .

The Chairman: Twelve.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Twelve. Sorry, my apologies.

—who has sought to understand, like, operationally, what does this look like? Members should be aware and recall that the full Cost of Living Commission Amendment Act includes existing provisions for price oversight in that the Commission has the ability to ask for information.

We recently came to this Honourable House and tabled a price tracker to be able to enhance transparency of cost. But what the Commission appreciated is that that cannot be the final picture that is shared with the public relating to cost, and that the final cost was just the end of the conversation relating to cost. And so, it is the providing through engagement with the retailers and wholesalers, the entire cost per container of a particular item. I'm sorry, particular items that are included in the Schedule.

So, let's take the 33 essential goods that are currently in law . . . or were in law, and those items being shared and requested by the Commission monthly. So, they are sharing that information.

We actually met with them in advance of the expansion, expanded items, to say: *Is this a difficult process? We understand that you all use similar systems. How hard is it to allot and assign these items?* There is an increased number of tariff codes with the new and expanded list of essential commodities. But the response was that it was possible, and that it would not add administrative burden to them, because it is part of the software and systems that they usually use. And it is an export to the Ministry using an Excel spreadsheet that they all would use often.

So, we do appreciate that there are additional costs that they may feel now, having reflected. And the Ministry and the Commission have always kept their

doors open to further understand those challenges. But at the end of the day, they need the data to make more informed decisions.

The Honourable Member also asked about clause 17 in terms of the appointment of individuals. So, we do have Consumer Affairs under the remit of the Ministry. Members would also be aware that there has been tabled in the previous Budget Debate and the most recent Budget Debate a pilot to the Regulatory Authority. Well, this actually is the infrastructure that we have already signalled is . . . we are seeking support. And the Regulatory Authority has supported the co-authoring of expanded legislation for future greater oversight over markets in this way, because we already knew that they do that well. And so existing remit is under the Consumer Protection Act. But we do see a more permanent place, perhaps somewhere else and in support by existing regulatory frameworks.

About specials, the Commission did deliberate and the Minutes also reflected the fact that this does not include specials. Even when we are talking about how we want to transparently have prices listed for these essential goods, that question was raised and reflected in the Minutes. And they decided that, no, not specials, because specials are quite frequent. And that will create, you know, added burden. And we are trying to advance transparency and also, as a Commission, have a better understanding of all costs and what makes up these costs to be able to make informed decisions about oversight.

I believe I've answered the three questions shared.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

I wasn't sure if I missed the answer, but part of the question that I asked before was, this particular Bill, on page 7 at the top, this 5 per cent that we are talking about in [new section] 7A(2), talks about a price increase. And what I was trying to find out is, are we also looking at price decrease? And I did not get the answer to whether or not this price that we're talking about was retail price or cost.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just trying to understand better.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for the clarification.

The answer is both. So, it is around retail price, the cost at the shelf. But also, the retail price and the cost also that has made up that price. So, the supply chain costs, that have been reflected or received by the frontline with the cost, essentially.

And the question that you have asked in terms of how does the 5 per cent . . . I don't know that I'm clear on . . . I mean, what we have invited is clarity around what makes up that price. The Commission has asked, at present, and the Minutes will reflect that they ask for it in monthly increments of time. And so, when you have it monthly you are going to naturally also see trends if it goes down or up, per the listed commodities included in the Act and the duty free item. That is the basis for further oversight and questioning as required. But it would present and provide trends, ultimately, if it is being received on a monthly basis. Those same items that receive duty relief and/or greater oversight. The Commission would be empowered through greater trend information.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions?
I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Just one more, just so I understand more clearly.

So, at the top it talks about this reporting being based on price increase. So, this Act does not require if the price goes down for them to report it, because it says *meaning price increase* when we apply [new] section 7A.

So, by rights, you know, if you are only looking for the increase as we go forward, if it goes down I do not have to tell you. Right? So, I'm just trying to understand why we wouldn't make sure that it is enshrined in an article here even meaning price increase and decrease.

The Chairman: Okay.
Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?
There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I do take the Honourable Member's suggestion. But I just want to also refer to the fact that they are not part of what is being presented at present and . . . amended, sorry, at present. The Act speaks to the increments of time that the Commission may be empowered to request information relating to price. That is a provision that is untouched by the amendments that we are speaking of this evening.

And so, any trends that would talk about price going up or down for whatever is listed as essential and critical would be reflected and reported on monthly. So,

the trend and the requirement for added signalling is almost I guess a little . . . I am still unclear about that.

But the intention is to be able to have monthly data shared to be able to both understand the trends, understand what makes up those costs. And should there be outliers in cost, they are being signalled to the Commission for them to say: *Okay. We better understand this. This is reasonable.* There is no challenge as included in the Schedule only, though.

So, but for the Schedule being populated, it is just a transparency provision, transparency framework that is currently being advanced.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Based on that answer, yes. I just want to make sure that we don't miss out on an opportunity for the Government here.

So, based on that answer, then . . . because the Bill here basically is saying that this applies, which means a 5 per cent or greater increase in the price or charge for the essential commodity within the same fiscal year. Right? And that the Minister then can, further on, intervene and change that percentage.

However, it does not state that if the cost is less . . . and I gave an example that sometimes there are opportunities if the cost is less. I'm still going to keep it at the same retail price to make a greater margin because I'm giving a sale somewhere else.

And I don't want to miss out on the opportunity that if they do reduce the cost . . . and I'm assuming what she is saying is that they will see the fact that the cost is reduced. But maybe the Minister might want control over that as well. In this case, she does not. If it goes down, it goes down. But she does not really have much control. Here it is saying she has control if it is 5 per cent or more.

So, I think there might be an answer there, but I'm not sure. But we will see as it goes along how it works.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30.
Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you.

Not a new question. Just I'm still waiting for the outstanding one about clause 11 as to why this particular authority was not given to the Commission, the Cost of Living Commission to avoid potential administrative bottlenecks with it being placed at the Minister.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

Okay. There being no one else at this time, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sorry, may I just seek clarification on clause 11 in terms of are you talking about 7A and the extent to which joint studies or other assessments are carried out? Is that what you're seeking to ask?

The Chairman: Member. I recognise—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: I recognise you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Just regarding [the Explanatory Memorandum for clause 11], “The Minister may by order, subject to the negative resolution procedure, amend the percentage figure and in doing so must have regard to the public interest, any reports or recommendations of the Commission . . .”

I am just wondering, instead of “the Minister may by order,” maybe this may have been something to empower the Commission, to avoid that bottleneck. Because now the Minister must . . . if it is deemed to be an intervention there it has to come through the Minister.

So, I'm just saying it already has “carried out by the Commission and the other regulatory body.” So why not just allow the intervention to be done via the Cost of Living Commission?

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none at this time, Minister, when you are ready to address this question . . .

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman

I think what the Honourable Member is seeking to present is actually not . . . it is representing an anomaly in the context of what is typically done by Ministers, and also as part of regulation. Just like I would table and/or lay a Regulatory Authority report in the House. The same is true based on what the Commission's findings and recommendations would be in order to advance an item that has been deemed critical and essential.

And there is a desire to have greater stewardship to support access for those in the public and remove the increases in cost. That is really what it is about. It is like allowing access to these items. If it is deemed to be critical, if you believe for dignity to live in Bermuda you need to have access to this good, this service, then that is the trigger for oversight. And the

oversight is around transparency about how we arrived at said cost.

And so, I did provide the Honourable Member with that example and/or explanation. I trust it is sufficient and happy to obviously discuss if further clarification is required.

The support of the Minister is also aided by both the Commission and the current price . . . price . . . what is it? The Consumer Protection Act. (I'm getting tired.) Consumer Protection Act, which does have investigative officers and the appropriate mechanisms to trigger investigations and support as required.

I think I have answered the questions.

I move that—

The Chairman: Just a minute.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Oh, sorry.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: And I move that clauses 1 through 12 [*sic*] be approved.

The Chairman: Just [clauses] 1 through 12?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Clause 20. Sorry. Be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 20 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 20 passed.]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 9:22 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled, the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, being reported to the House as printed?

There are no objections.

The Bill will be reported as printed.

That brings us to the close of that matter and moves us on to the next item, which is [Order] No. 7. The second reading of the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 in the name of the Junior Minister for Justice.

Junior Minister, would you like to present your matter at this moment?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker and to the listening audience, my honourable colleagues.

It is late on a Friday night, Mr. Speaker, so we will try and do this, and hopefully there is not much objection from the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

BILL

SECOND READING

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present for the consideration of this Honourable House, the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, a Bill that answers plainly and directly the call that has echoed from every parish that the violence must end and that justice must be done.

Bermuda is a community of neighbours. We are an Island where families have lived side by side for

generations, where we greet one another on our roots and where the loss of any one of us is felt by all of us. That is precisely why the escalating crisis of gang violence cuts so deeply. Behind every headline is a mother who has buried a son, or a family whose life has been divided forever into a “before” and an “after.” Over the past two decades, this Island has recorded over 30 unsolved murders, which have been the product of gangs, guns, and a corrosive culture of reprisal.

Mr. Speaker, these are not cold cases in the sense of being forgotten. The Bermuda Police Service has been clear that these cases are not closed. What stands between these families and justice is not in most cases a lack of truth. It is fear. In case after case, the police know that people in our community hold the key. People who saw something, who heard something, or who know something. However, they do not come forward because they are afraid.

Mr. Speaker, this Government refuses to accept that fear should have the final word in Bermuda. This Bill's organising purpose is convictions and securing them lawfully, fairly, and effectively. It is convictions that take shooters off our streets, convictions that break the cycle of retaliation and convictions that bring closure to grieving families who have waited far too long.

The Bill strengthens three pillars of our criminal law, namely, the Evidence Act 1905, the Criminal Code Act 1907, and the Bail Act 2005. I shall address each in turn.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Evidence Act 1905 to introduce two new court-controlled protections, investigations anonymity orders and witness anonymity orders.

An investigation anonymity order granted by a magistrate will prohibit the disclosure of information identifying a person as someone who is assisting a serious criminal investigation. In plain terms, it means that a person who wants to do the right thing can speak to the police without the whole Island knowing they have done so. Information can flow safely to investigators at the very stage when it matters most.

A witness anonymity order granted only by the Supreme Court will permit a witness to give evidence at trial with their identity protected through the withholding of their name, the use of a pseudonym, screening, or voice modulation where the court is satisfied that such measures are necessary, consistent with a fair trial and in the interest of justice. Witness anonymity is not a silver bullet, as no single measure will on its own solve the crisis of gang violence. But is a good tool in the toolbox, a proven tool in use in the United Kingdom, in Canada, in Australia and in neighbouring jurisdictions.

This Bill gives those who hold critical testimony a lawful, judiciously supervised path to share it. Every conviction secured is a retaliation that never happens, and every verdict delivered is a family at long last given an answer.

Mr. Speaker, these protections are tightly confined. They are available only for serious arrestable offences as defined under section 3 of the Police and Criminal [Evidence] Act 2006, a familiar tested statutory threshold that excludes minor offending. It is the Court, and never the prosecutor, that decides whether an order is granted. At trial, anonymity may be ordered only where the Supreme Court is satisfied that it is necessary, that it is consistent with the defendant receiving a fair trial and that the interest of justice requires the witness's testimony.

The Bill expressly requires the trial judge to warn the jury so that making of an order cannot prejudice the defendant. The right to silence is untouched. The common law of public interest immunity is preserved, and the Director of Public Prosecutions must review the operation of the entire regime and report to both Houses of this Legislature within three years, so this Parliament retains oversight on how these powers are used.

Mr. Speaker, some have suggested that these protections should be limited to gang-related charges. The Government has considered that suggestion carefully and, with respect, must resist it. Gang-related is not a defined term in Bermuda law and to build witness protection upon an undefined concept would invite endless litigation over whether a case qualifies, producing delay and uncertainty precisely where speed and certainty are needed.

More fundamentally, it puts the cart before the horse, as it is very often the investigation itself, assisted by protected persons, protected witnesses, that establishes gang involvement in the first place. The serious arrestable offence threshold combined with the rigorous judicial safeguards I have described does the narrowing that fairness requires.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge, too, the concern voiced by some in the profession that true anonymity is difficult in a jurisdiction as small as ours. We do not dismiss that concern. However, the difficulty of protecting witnesses can never be a reason to abandon them.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Criminal Code Act 1907 to create new offences of assaulting or intimidating a judicial officer, a prosecutor, or a Member of the Legislature whether on duty or targeted off duty in retaliation for, or because of, their office.

Honourable Members may ask whether such provisions are truly necessary in Bermuda. Regrettably, they are. A Crown Counsel has been threatened within the very precincts of our courts. A magistrate has been threatened in a separate matter. And those who serve in our justice system will tell you that such threats occur far more often than will ever be publicly known. When those who uphold the rule of law can be menaced with impunity, it is not only they who are attacked but also the administration of justice itself, and with it the safety of every citizen who depends upon it.

The penalties in this Bill reflect that gravity with up to 25 years imprisonment on indictment for assault

occasioning bodily harm to an official in the execution of duty, up to 15 years for retaliatory attacks on off-duty officials, and up to 10 years for intimidation. As a safeguard against misuse, no prosecution may be brought without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has listened to the constructive suggestion that this protection be extended to jury members. We agree. Jurors sit at the very heart of the trial process this Bill is designed to protect. So, intimidating a juror strikes at verdicts as directly as intimidating a judge. The Government will therefore support an amendment on the floor of this Honourable House to include jury members within the protected class.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends the Bail Act 2005 to confront a problem that has undermined public confidence for too long, which is, bail conditions breached with little or no consequence, leaving witnesses and communities exposed. Under this Bill, the wilful or unlawful breach of a bail condition becomes a criminal offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine of up to \$25,000, or imprisonment for up to three years in the case of court bail, with proportionate penalties for breaches of police bail. No prosecution may be brought without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions, a safeguard that ensures the trivial or the inadvertent will not be criminalised, and that prosecutorial judgment is applied to every case. The Bill also introduces a right to refer a bail decision of the Magistrates' Court to the Supreme Court for a full re-hearing.

Mr. Speaker, I emphasise that this right is even-handed as it is available equally to the defence, where bail has been refused, and to the prosecution, where bail has been granted over its objection. Judicial discretion is not removed as a higher court simply takes a fresh look. The Commissioner of Police has confirmed that these amendments will allow the police to act quickly to stop further offending and to protect witnesses, and that assurance goes to the very heart of what this Bill is about.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has been careful in ensuring that decisive action remains fair. The Bill has been reviewed for compliance with the constitutional guarantee of a fair trial and with other human rights obligations. Every significant power it creates is placed in the hands of an independent court. The jury must be warned. The DPP's office consent gates the new offences. The legislation retains oversight through a mandatory three-year review.

I also acknowledge the Bermuda Police Service which has endorsed this Bill with the Commissioner describing it as a clear indication of a commitment to strengthening our criminal justice system and a positive and practical step forward. I thank the Commissioner and the women and men of the service who confront this violence every day on our behalf. And I acknowledge the members of the public who have

welcomed this Bill and who have called upon their Government to act.

Laws set the boundaries of what a society will tolerate, and this Bill declares in terms that no one can mistake what Bermuda will no longer tolerate. We will not tolerate witnesses silenced by fear; we will not tolerate those who serve justice being threatened for doing so; and we will not tolerate bail treated as a suggestion rather than an obligation.

Mr. Speaker, to the families who have waited years for answers, the Government has heard you. And today these lives matter, and because their memory demands, we act.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that the Bill entitled the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read a second time, and I commend it to this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Junior Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening.

I thank the Honourable Junior Minister for his presentation in relation to this Bill. I also would like to specifically thank the Honourable Attorney General, although she does not sit in this House and sits in another place, as she reached out in relation to this Bill. And we have had some discussions in relation to it, some of which have been fruitful, as the Junior Minister noted, in terms of the floor amendment that he intends to move in relation to clause 3.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill in effect does four things. Firstly, it is going to permit Bermuda's criminal justice system to have investigative anonymity orders and witness anonymity orders. What, you may ask, are the differences between those two things? Well, the investigative anonymity order applies to the investigative stage from the events through to trial, just before trial. And then the witness anonymity order allows for anonymity during the trial itself. So, there are two different types of orders envisaged, and I will come back to those.

The second of four things that this Bill does is clarify that it will be a criminal offence if you assault or intimidate those who are involved with the criminal court system, specifically a judicial officer. And I understand that that would include any other judicial officers, such as a bailiff who might be in court at the time.

It extends to assault and intimidation of the prosecutor. And as the Honourable MP made the point earlier, excuse me, Junior Minister, the Honourable Junior Minister made the point earlier, MP Lister, this is not just fantasy or what if. These things have actually occurred in our courts. And I am familiar with at least two of them.

I am very grateful to the Junior Minister and the Minister that they were prepared to adopt the Opposition's recommendation that the offences of assault and intimidation also extend to members of the jury, because we were concerned about jury intimidation and assault as well. And so, I do thank the Honourable and Learned Minister, who, as I say, sits in another place. On this very occasion this evening, she is in the Chamber as well.

The third of four things that this Bill does is create a new offence of breach of bail conditions. And that is pretty self-explanatory.

And the fourth thing it does is really just a technical provision on transitional provisions. But the important part of that fourth thing is that this will not be retrospective. So, this will be going forward in time in relation to future criminal investigations and criminal trials.

At its heart, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is trying to address, and I'll quote from the preamble, "the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda." And I would like to just pause there to observe that this Government is right, in my respectful opinion, to describe it as a crisis. I believe it is a crisis.

And I also commend the Government for having the proper focus on this piece of legislation, because I know that sometimes we in the Opposition stand up and say: *Well, why are you bringing this Bill? Why are you doing that? Why aren't you focusing on real problems?* And I think on this occasion, we are agreed on both sides of the House that this is a real problem.

Now, I'm being very nice. I'm sure I will have some things to say that are less nice about solutions. But I really do appreciate the focus that is being presented. And I think the general Bermudian public appreciates it because it is a crisis and it is very real.

And now turning to the four elements of the Bill, or three, the three substantive elements, I'm not going to comment on the transitional provisions. Turning to the three elements of the Bill itself, I do not really need to comment much on the bail condition; it is the creation of a new offence. So, if you are in breach of your bail condition, well, that too is a crime, and you could be put in jail for that. Self-explanatory.

I do want to touch quickly on the assault and intimidation point. And again, I have already expressed my thanks in relation to the fact that jurors are now included. Which I think is essential because jurors in our system have to know that they too are protected by the system and that we will have no truck with assault or intimidation of them. And of course, they seem a ripe target if those who are involved with the defendant, perhaps in the same gang, figure that that is a pressure point to put pressure on. And we must ensure insofar as we are able that that pressure is not applied. And that if it is applied, that those people too receive sanction. A criminal sanction.

Turning then to the anonymity orders. And again, I made clear when I started that there are two different kinds. There is one in relation to the investigation. And then there is one in relation to the witness giving evidence at the trial. And, in my submission, that distinction is an important one. Because I can see the justification for witness anonymity during the investigative stage. I do not see why that offends against someone's conscience that people are able to liaise with investigative officers, with the prosecution, with the police on an anonymous basis, and give that evidence that helps those investigating to formulate what their case will be and to formulate the charges brought. And so, one, I think, has less of an issue during the investigative period with anonymity orders applying to witnesses in that context.

Just to be boring for a minute, how does that work? It is going to work by application to a magistrate, as the Honourable Junior Minister pointed out. There is an eyebrow-raising point there, and I will just mention it in passing. But I will pause to note that the defendant's attorney is not present at that hearing for the investigative anonymity order to be granted. I query whether that might be something that someone would complain about, perhaps. But I just mention it in passing.

What is slightly different is the witness anonymity order in the context of the trial. And this is where we do part company with the Government on the Bill as it is presented tonight.

Really, this is a Bill that, as I quoted, is to effectively address the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda. And if you are going to have people be able to give their evidence anonymously in a criminal trial, you have to make sure that that is really restricted to the proper circumstance and situation.

In the UK, for example, witness anonymity for the trial relates to cases of terrorism. And one can perhaps understand why, when we are dealing with terrorism, one might have witness anonymity. Likewise, the parallel here would be cases relating to a crisis of gang violence. And whilst the Bill says that is what it is about, it is slightly concerning that at present, if the Bill is not amended, this actually will apply to all qualifying offences. And qualifying offences are defined as a serious arrestable offence.

And I'm not going to bore everyone with the law, but a serious arrestable offence is quite a broad concept. There are a number of charges that fall within serious arrestable offences that have absolutely nothing to do with gang-related activity. And so, we have invited the Government to consider further between now and when this Bill makes it to the other place whether it would be right and proper at the application for the trial to the Supreme Court judge, the investigative stage is dealt with by the magistrate. It is the Supreme Court judge who deals . . . he or she would deal with the trial anonymity. And we wonder, given that at that stage, charges will have been laid, and we will know what they are. We wonder whether it would be

more appropriate at that stage just to limit it to gang-related charges, or those charges that do or may, perhaps. Again, I leave the wording precisely to the Government to think about. But that is the point in a nutshell.

And why do we suggest that change? Well, at the moment there are already charges in the Criminal Code in relation to gang-related activity. I think that my honourable colleague, Jarion Richardson, MP, is going to speak in a moment. And he knows far more about this than I do from his previous career. But just for anyone who really is interested, there is [in the Criminal Code Act 1907] section 70JA (that is Juliet Alpha), and section 70JB (Juliet Bravo), which relate to actual charges of gang-related activity.

Unless the point is not completely understood, let me just return just briefly to this idea that serious arrestable offences are quite broad. And we would like to see witness anonymity simply narrowed to cases of gang-related activity. Why do we say that? Well, let me just give two hypothetical examples.

One hypothetical would be the charge of rape. If you were arrested and brought to court on a charge of rape, but the person who alleges that you raped her (if I use the man as a rapist and the female as the victim or alleged victim) . . . you would not actually know, if a witness anonymity order was granted, who your accuser was. And I think that does pause us for thought.

Well, hang on, you mean I could be arrested, charged with rape, go to court and actually not know who is making that accusation against me?

And the answer is, yes. Under this Bill as it stands, that could happen.

Now, maybe that is too extreme an example. Let me take a less extreme example, but still a concern. Let us say that you came into work at your bank one day, and you are brought into the office, and there the police are, and you are arrested because it is said that you took money out of the bank till. And you say: *Well, no, I didn't.*

They say: Well, I have someone who saw you take the money out of the bank till, and you are being arrested, you are being charged.

And off to trial you go. And you get to trial, but you are not told who the witness was who saw you take the money out of the bank till.

So, I hope those examples, which are not extreme examples, show us why when we are dealing with gang-related activity, or terrorism, witness anonymity protection orders are understandable and potentially defensible. But when we are dealing with all serious arrestable offences, I do suggest it is a bridge too far to not have a right to know who your accuser is. And the right to face your accuser is a right of long-standing. It goes back hundreds of years. I said jokingly to someone earlier, it was older than the Magna Carta. I'm not sure I was right about that, but there we are.

So, I have invited, we have invited the Government, who were very good at taking on our suggestion

about protecting jurors. And we thank them for that. And we have invited them to this one further change to the legislation as and when it moves to the other place in the Upper House.

And let me just conclude with these remarks. We absolutely do appreciate the severity of the gang problem. And I have said before publicly that if we are going to tackle the gang problem, it involves all of us. Every single person on this Island has to recognise that we are in it together and we have to solve the problem together. It will not be solved by isolated pockets here and there around the Island. It has to be a collective effort.

And before I take my seat, I forgot to mention earlier when I was talking about the two specific gang-related charges. If I may be so complimentary, I do not know when they came in, under what Government or how long ago. But they were actually very good ideas. Because what they did was, if you brought a . . . you had a charge of gang-related activity, you got an additional period of incarceration if that was proved at trial. And that is the kind of thing I think that we want to see happening more. Because I am told, and it is anecdotal, and I'll defer again to Mr. Richardson, MP, and his depth, great depth of knowledge in this field, but I'm told that those sections are not really being used very much in criminal cases and charges before our courts.

So again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable and Learned Attorney General, and thank you to the Junior Minister for his detailed presentation.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member . . . MP Weeks, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, I will, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue, Member.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you for having me.

Before I get started, I want to say I give full support to the Junior Minister on bringing this Justice and Community Safety [Reform] Act 2026, and to commend the Attorney General and her team for doing this.

I am not going to be technical and go through line by line, but I really want to speak about why these reforms are important, Mr. Speaker, why they deserve our support, and why they represent another meaningful step in this Government's ongoing commitment to building safer communities and strengthening Bermuda's justice system.

Mr. Speaker, every Member of this Honourable House shares a responsibility to ensure that our constituents go home safe, that our homes are secure, and they should be confident that the institution that has been designed to protect them is actually equipped to meet the challenges we face today, Mr. Speaker. So, I firmly feel that that responsibility requires us not only to

respond to crime, Mr. Speaker, when it occurs, but also to ensure that our laws remain effective, balanced, and capable of addressing the evolving nature of criminal activity as we see it in Bermuda today.

As we all know, Bermuda has made significant progress in confronting gang violence and organised crime over recent years. That progress has not happened by chance. It has been achieved through the dedication of our Bermuda Police Service, the hard work of our prosecutors and judiciary, the commitment of community organisations, and the resilience of countless Bermudians who have refused to allow violence, Mr. Speaker, to define our Island. Those efforts deserve recognition. But they also remind us that progress cannot lead to complacency, Mr. Speaker. Criminal activity continues to evolve. We now live in a Bermuda where violence has almost become the norm. We have a gang culture that is out there that is not willy-nilly. They are organised. They do things in an organised fashion. And I believe that our judiciary and our legislation must evolve to meet this new challenge.

I heard the [Honourable and Learned] Member who just took his seat. And I agree with what he was saying. But one thing is, it may be a stretch, but it is not for me. Terrorism takes on different ways. Terrorism sometimes forces our Government to act. And the way this new gang culture is in Bermuda, they are forcing the Government to act, to stay connected to the ever-evolving nature of the criminal activity. So, as far as that is concerned, I think that is why I welcome this Bill, because we have to look seriously about protecting our communities and our country and let those who are involved in the gang lifestyle know that this Government is watching, and looking, and we are doing what we can.

So, what I really appreciate about these reforms is that they are not simply about imposing tougher penalties or creating additional offences. They reflect a broader commitment, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our justice system remains effective, fair, and responsive to the realities faced by law enforcement prosecutors, victims, and the courts.

Importantly, these reforms also form part of the Government's wider anti-violence strategy. Over the last couple of years, the Ministry of National Security has put in place the [National] Violence Reduction Strategy, and it has been rolled out. This is inextricably bound to that Strategy, Mr. Speaker. I believe this is worth emphasising because reducing violence cannot be achieved only through enforcement. We all recognise that lasting change requires investment in prevention, education, intervention, rehabilitation, and stronger partnerships throughout our communities. Mr. Speaker, prevention, education, intervention are direct tenets of the anti-violence strategy. So, this is not just a punitive change that is being done by the Attorney General and her team.

I feel that our young people, Mr. Speaker, must continue to see opportunities that lead them away from violence. Families must receive the support they need. Community organisations, schools, faith leaders, and youth programmes all have an important role to play in creating safer neighbourhoods. But, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we must also recognise that those efforts are strengthened by a justice system that commands public confidence and has the legal tools necessary to respond effectively when serious offences occur.

So, in my view, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what this Bill seeks to achieve. One of the provisions I particularly welcome is the introduction of investigation anonymity. (And if I say that where I roll, Mr. Speaker, I was up last night putting this together and I could not pronounce it. So, I practiced a lot. So, anonymity.)

The Speaker: Anonymity.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Anonymity orders.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I did. Anonymity orders.

Witness anonymity orders in appropriate cases involving serious criminal investigations and proceedings.

For many years, Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest obstacles to securing successful prosecutions has not really been a lack of evidence. In my experience now, the evidence is there. People do not want to give evidence. People are afraid to give evidence. People give evidence and change their positions. So, fear is a real issue in us trying to bring perpetrators to justice.

Too often, individuals who want to do the right thing find themselves weighing their civic responsibility against concerns for their own safety and the well-being of their families. This Government has increased rewards through Crime Stoppers to help in trying to entice people to come and give evidence. It has gone from \$50,000 for evidence leading to conviction, Mr. Speaker . . . from \$10,000 (I should say) to \$50,000. And people are still having trouble coming forward because they value their life and the lives of their family more than giving proper evidence that could help do what is necessary.

In order for us to bring dangerous offenders to court, Mr. Speaker, we have to do what . . . we have to support this Bill, because when we do these kinds of things, when we support these kinds of initiatives, that is directly out of the anti-violence strategy or inextricably bound to it. (That is another word that I had trouble with last night: inextricably bound to it.) Justice is not only denied to victims. Communities are left with the perception that intimidation can silence the truth. That is something no society committed to the rule of law, Mr. Speaker, can accept.

So, for that reason, I support the measures contained within this Bill that allow the courts, in carefully defined circumstances, to protect the identity of witnesses where doing so is necessary and appropriate.

I have heard the speaker who just sat down and the Junior Minister make it clear that this feature is not for everyone. The judge will determine who gets the privilege of anonymity. So, it is equally important to recognise that these protections are neither automatic, as I stress, nor unrestricted. They are subject to judicial oversight and may only be granted where strict statutory conditions have been satisfied.

That, Mr. Speaker, is an important safeguard. I have had conversations over these last couple of days about the law, and people having the right to face their accuser. Generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, I agree. But having the experience of what this gang culture actually is in Bermuda, in real terms . . . you know, a lot of times we sit in coffee shops and barber shops and other things and talk about the rights of, not only the victim, but the perpetrators. All that sounds good. All that, a lot of times, sounds intelligent. But if we are going to be able to get on top of what we are facing, right now, in this country, we have to be courageous. We have to be mindful that this Bill, in my opinion, is not targeted for all crime. We have been forced to look at this specifically because of what the gang culture is currently doing to our Island.

So as the Junior Minister explained, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court must carefully consider every application before granting anonymity. So, to me, that demonstrates that these reforms have been carefully balanced. Protecting witnesses, and protecting the rights of defendants, are not really, Mr. Speaker, competing principles. A modern justice system must be capable of achieving both those aims. So, I believe this legislation strikes that balance in a thoughtful and responsible way. So again, I take my hat off to the Attorney General, and her team, for looking at it and seeing what we could come up with without eroding the rights of the perpetrator and/or the victim.

And I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that when the public has confidence that they can assist law enforcement, I firmly believe that we will get more people coming forward, more people giving evidence. I cannot tell you the amount of people in my former role who would tell me: *Minister, I know this, and I know that, but I'm not going to say nothing. Or I can't say nothing.* And you are always promising to look out for them and ensure their safety. But this kind of Bill here helps to achieve that end, in my opinion.

Another aspect of this Bill I strongly support is the enhanced protection afforded to those entrusted with administering justice and serving our institutions. That is the members of the justice system, our lawyers, our prosecutors, our jurors, I definitely agree with. And even police officers. We have to make sure that

everybody is safe, Mr. Speaker, without any kind of fear of intimidation.

Likewise, Members of this Honourable House. You know, times are changing, Mr. Speaker. And I have had conversations, and there have been conversations about what kind of protections even for Members of the Honourable House can receive on a day-to-day basis. So, this is a new Bermuda. But this is not calling the situation dire. It is just about modernising our laws. And I must stress that while Bermuda has fortunately avoided many of the incidents that we hear [about] and see elsewhere, we cannot ignore the reality that public officials across the world increasingly face harassment, intimidation and in some cases violence, simply for carrying out their lawful responsibilities. We see these kinds of things on the news more and more now.

And what I am saying is that we need to be proactive rather than reactive and wait until something happens here. So good government is not about waiting for problems to emerge, Mr. Speaker. It is about anticipating future risks and ensuring that our laws provide appropriate protections before those risks become entrenched.

So, these are some of the reasons I welcome the provisions creating specific offences to the intimidation and assault of judicial officers, prosecutors and members of our Legislature. So, some of these measures, Mr. Speaker, are not designed to shield public officials, as I have read the Bill, from criticism. Robust debate, public scrutiny, and respectful disagreement remain essential features of every healthy democracy. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, they help strengthen our democratic institutions. There is an important distinction between legitimate criticism and conduct that is intended to intimidate, threaten, or interfere with those responsible for administering justice or carrying out public duties.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat, I want to say that this legislation recognises that we have to modernise our approach to crime right now in Bermuda, and I think this legislation has been put together in an appropriate and a measured way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Richardson.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening to you, sir.

The Speaker: Good evening.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, my final posting in the Bermuda Police Service was as criminal intelligence officer with specific responsibilities. And, as such, I had access to certain facts about our gang combating strategy and tools. I will attempt to walk the line

and not disclose anything from that career. Suffice it to say that I have played, and continue to support, the role of our crime fighters in this space.

Subsequent to my career in that area of criminal intelligence, I did move on, and now most of my reading still revolves around organised crime, mostly international or transnational organised crime relating to the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing in our jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, I am following my colleague, MP Pearman, in his contribution relating to witness anonymity and this Bill. This Bill has to be supported. The pervasive nature of criminal activity in our Island disrupts not just every good part of our Island, but even the mediocre, random, and small things of our lives are made that much harder by criminal conduct. I actually feel quite strongly about it. But this House has its dignity, and I will therefore restrain myself when it comes to talking about criminals.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that fear of giving evidence is a credible threat to our criminal justice system. We are a small, small jurisdiction and it is not hard for our criminal justice system to be countered by even rudimentary organised crime by way of, amongst others, witness intimidation. But, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to talk about this Bill as a matter arising because of the increased threat of gang and gang activity in prosecuting their criminal activities, it is worth taking a step back and looking at our overall legislative strategy in this area. Because I think what it would do is give the Government a better direction of travel, which would assist in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, criminal laws that touch on gang activity are typically, in Bermuda, after the fact. They are increasing penalties, they create aggravating offences or aggravating circumstances, they effectively just make the criminal conduct that already occurred be penalised worse. There is little legislation that deals directly with organised crime enterprises or disrupting organised crime enterprises.

I bring that up because Bermuda is a small community, and anonymity is going to be a useful tool. I say that with a bit of a heavy heart, because it goes against certain legal principles that I think any member of the wider legal fraternity (I am not an attorney) . . . those are principles that one carries with them. And they try to hold those dear in their participation in our legal framework. Nonetheless, giving evidence in Bermuda is a hard thing in such a small place, when the risks are so high.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would add that that goes to the point of evidence, and how evidence gets admitted into our courts, and how prosecution takes place, and how people are convicted. One of the things people say in Bermuda a lot is: *Well, if you know who they are, why don't you just go get them?* Well, that is because knowledge is not . . . knowledge itself is not admissible in court. It requires a transmission, a translation, as it were, Mr. Speaker. And it is in that admission, it is in

that translation that we in a small community face our biggest problem, which this Bill is attempting, or starting to attempt, to fix.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak to some of the things that we can do that will enhance this Bill, because this Bill is in the right direction. But it has to go a lot further than this, because right now this Bill is addressing witness evidence, Mr. Speaker. Eyewitnesses, victims, admissions. The Honourable Member who just took his seat spoke to witness statements that go in. They get withdrawn. It is a very nebulous area. A very difficult area. And when you are trying to protect witnesses, as was part of my former mandate, in an environment where they are toe-to-toe with the offenders, they have every right to acknowledge, and see, and feel the threat. But there are other forms of evidence that investigations should be able to bring to the court.

Right now, our Evidence Act and our Police and Criminal Evidence Act are working together. Police and Criminal Evidence Act, I want to say 2006, came in and radically changed how we did policing in Bermuda. But it did not go far enough, Mr. Speaker, because forensic evidence, such as, DNA, fingerprints, ballistics, et cetera, pathology, and toxicology, are areas that we have been having problems with. We have seen that in the media.

But one of the areas that (and I really have to work carefully on this one) . . . that we ought to be very good at, and we have every . . . we are capable of being good at, is digital and electronic evidence, most specifically relating to things like GPS and telecommunications. Equally, documentary evidence, physical evidence, et cetera.

But my point, Mr. Speaker, is that this Bill is strengthening one piece, one evidential path, which is the witness. And if this Government seeks to challenge the legal principle behind a person who is innocent until proven guilty—their right to face their accuser—I think that some of the evidence that has to be brought before this House would include things like: How many investigations failed because witnesses refused to cooperate? How many witnesses withdrew statements? How many murder or firearms prosecutions were discontinued because witnesses would not testify? How many acquittals were substantially attributable to witness intimidation? And how many prosecutions relied solely or principally on civilian eyewitness rather than forensic evidence?

These are some of the statistics that would enable the House to justify creating a statute which infringes upon what an attorney would call an ancient legal right.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative gaps in our framework in combating organised crime are in the areas of the evidence, as I have been working towards. Areas that we have to sort of keep going on. And I hope that the Honourable Attorney General, who deserves credit for bringing this matter forward (as I am echoing my colleague MP Pearman), . . . We need a statutory

framework relating to covert human intelligence sources; modern communications data acquisition, including metadata, traffic data, subscriber information; real-time and historical digital communications orders; explicit tracking. I could go on, but I fear that talking too much on too many of these points would not be conducive to securing the things that we have in Bermuda in place at the moment.

Suffice it to say that one of the things that we admired in my time was the UK's regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act that regulated directed surveillance, intrusive surveillance, covert human intelligence sources, communications data intercepts, and matters such as that. Now that has largely been replaced by the Investigatory Powers Act, which covers the same area, but includes internet connection records and other matters of technological importance.

The reason why I think that these are the paths to take in addition to the witness development, is because these areas are immediately available. And we often have the expertise necessary to undertake it. But what we need to have is the statutory ability that this House could bring, which would allow for the ease of converting knowledge—or, in this case, intelligence—into admissible evidence. That is how we can interdict criminal activity in this Island and ensure that the cases that are brought before the courts are sufficiently robust. That is incredibly difficult, because Mr. Speaker, witnesses—eyewitnesses, especially—form only one part of what is a complex web, when we are prosecuting these areas.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I would also add that there is a problem with this legislation that I trust the Honourable Attorney General to attend to. And that is obviously that Bermuda is a very, very, very, very small place. Our court buildings are limited. Our parking to get to those court buildings is limited. The entrances, exit, egress to those buildings is limited. The timings of trials are typically publicly known. And that means that . . . and there are also multiple people fulfilling roles within the court process. This includes not only jurors and judges and clerks. It includes bailiffs and corrections officers, police officers. It is a very full place, a court that is trying a matter, and people are coming and going.

And given the size of Bermuda, given the relative little geographic distribution, I could see how easy it would be for anonymity to be lost. And so, to that end, I think that it is crucial that before using this power, that we ensure the security of the courts is maintained. Because as it stands right now, it is an incredibly porous environment, and that information gets out quite easily.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I would just wrap up with by repeating that I think the direction of travel, is right. I think that there is further to go. I think that what we . . . what the next stage, if we are working on developing evidence and admissible evidence into the court, is that we should be working on data points, which are more readily available. That would also

reduce the necessity for us to rely on witnesses, thereby increasing the safety of those witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? Any other?

Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know after hearing the comments . . . and I thank my colleague MP Weeks, and the comments from the Opposition, hearing the support in general for this, Mr. Speaker. So, as I said, hearing that, I will now move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's me.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Yes.

House in Committee at 10:18 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

The Chairman: Thank you, Sergeant.

Members, we are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026](#).

Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I would like to . . .

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes. Okay.

I would like to move the clauses. And being that there is not a lot, can I do (I would like to separate them, though) clauses 1 and 2 first, and then [clauses] 3 to 6. Is that okay? Okay.

The Chairman: Members, it has been moved that we consider clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Evidence Act 1905, the Criminal Code Act 1907, and the Bail Act 2005 to make provision to effectively address the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the Evidence Act 1905 by inserting a new Part, (Roman numeral) IVB, sections 68F to 68Y, to "introduce investigation anonymity order" and "witness anonymity order." In particular, new sections 68F to 68H provide for interpretation. A "qualifying offence" is a serious, arrestable offence under section 3 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 2006. A "qualifying criminal investigation" is one conducted with a view to ascertaining whether a person should be charged with, or is guilty of, such an offence.

New sections 68I to 68K empower a magistrate on application by the Commissioner of Police, or the Director of Public Prosecutions, and without notice to a suspect, to grant an investigation anonymity order prohibiting the disclosure that a person is able or willing to assist a qualifying criminal investigation. The magistrate must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that a qualifying offence has been committed, and that the person fears intimidation or harm, and can provide information that would assist, and is more likely than not to do so if the order is made. Innocent disclosure, disclosure within the investigation or prosecution, and disclosure required by law or court order are not contraventions.

New sections 68L and 68M provide for an appeal to the Supreme Court against a refusal to make an order, and for discharge of an order, where there has been a material change of circumstances.

New sections 68N to 68Q empower the Supreme Court, on the application of the prosecutor or the defendant, to make a witness anonymity order protecting a witness's identity at trial through measures including a withheld name, a pseudonym, restrictions on questioning, screening and voice modulation. The witness must remain visible and audible to the judge and jury. The court may make an order only where the measures are necessary, consistent with the defendant receiving a fair trial and required in the interest of justice, and must weigh the defendant's right to know the identity of a witness, whether the evidence might be so or decisive, whether it can properly be tested without disclosure, any motive of the witness to be dishonest and whether lesser measures would suffice.

New section 68R requires the judge on a trial with a jury to warn the jury so that the making of the order does not prejudice the defendant.

New sections 68S to 68U provide for the discharge of variation of a witness anonymity order during proceedings after proceedings have ended, and by the court of appeal on an appeal by the defendant.

New sections 68V to 68Y preserve public interest immunity at common law [and] require the Director of Public Prosecutions to review the operation of this Part and report to both Houses within three years; make it an offence punishable by a fine of \$100,00, or 10 years imprisonment, or both, to disclose information in contravention of either order and empower the Minister to make regulations.

Those are clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

There are no other persons.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that those be approved, clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, I would suggest that since you are doing an amendment on clause 3, to do it by itself.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, I will.

The Chairman: Yes. Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

I will now move clauses 3 through 6.

The Chairman: No, do it by itself.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Oh, [clause] 3. Right. Yes, yes.

Clause 3 amends the Criminal Code Act [1907] by inserting a new section 310A, creating offences of assault on, and intimidation of, a judicial officer, a prosecutor, or a Member of the Legislature. Assault on an official in the execution of his duty, five years on a summary conviction, 25 years on indictment. Retaliatory assault on an off-duty official, five years summary conviction, 15 years in indictment. And threats against an official, five years for summary conviction, and 10 years on indictment. No prosecution may be instituted without the consent of the director of public prosecutions.

The Chairman: Minister, do not forget that you wish to amend this clause.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

I wish to amend clause 3.

Can I proceed?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

The Chairman: Read the amendment.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 3

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be amended in clause 3, in the new section 310A(5) of the Criminal Code Act 1907 by (a)—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —by (a), yes. By—

a) deleting the full stop after the words “a member of the Legislature” and substituting a semicolon; and

b) inserting after paragraph (c)—
“(d) a person who is serving as a juror.”

The Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: That is the amendment.

The Chairman: Okay.

All those in favour of the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chairman: Ayes. Okay.

No objections?

An Hon. Member: No objection.

The Chairman: The amendment is moved.
Continue.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 3 passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Clause . . . I will now move clause—

The Chairman: Would you like to move clause 3 as amended?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I would like to move clause 3 as amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clause 3 as amended.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Motion carried: Clause 3 passed as amended.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

I would now like to move clauses 4 through 6.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we . . . you want to consider clauses 4 through—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 4 through 6.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Clause 4 amends the Bail Act 2005. New section 10A makes the wilful or unlawful breach of police bail an offence, a fine of \$3,000 or 12 months imprisonment; bail in criminal proceedings, a fine of \$25,000 or three years imprisonment, subject to the consent of the director of public prosecutions.

New section 14B permits a bail decision of the Magistrates' Court in respect of a relevant offence to be referred to the Supreme Court for a full rehearing by the defendant within seven working days where bail is refused, and by the prosecutor within four working days where bail is granted over the prosecutor's objection. The Supreme Court may confirm, reverse or modify the decision.

Clause 5 applies the amendments made by clause 2 to criminal investigations and proceedings that begin, or that have begun but not ended, on or after the commencement of that clause.

Clause 6 provides that the Act shall come into operation on such date or dates as the Minister responsible for Justice may appoint by notice published in *The [Official] Gazette*.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 4 through 6?

There being no other persons.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 4 through 6 be considered.

The Chairman: Approved.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Approved, yes.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 4 through 6 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 4 through 6 passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay. I move the preamble. Right?

The Chairman: Preamble.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay. I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed or amended.

The Chairman: It has been—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Oh, as amended.

The Chairman: Yes.

It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the Whole House and passed as amended.]

House resumed at 10:29 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 being reported to the House as amended?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: There are none.

The matter has been reported to the House as amended. Thank you.

The next item, [Order] No. 8, the Motion by the Premier is being carried over.

[Order] No. 9, the Motion by Minister Furbert is carried over.

And that now moves us to the Bill by the . . . the Bills, two Bills, by the Opposition.

Opposition, are we going to do item . . . Oh.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: You will recall that there was an agreement for us to do [Order] No. 2—

The Speaker: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —and moving it short notice?

The Speaker: Members, we are seeking the indulgence of the House to do the matter that the Minister of Health tabled this morning, that we, that was agreed that it would be done for the readings today, all readings.

Any objection?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable and Learned Minister of Health has raised this Bill with us, and we are agreeing to a first, second, and third reading all today on this Bill.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 29(1)

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 29(1) be suspended to enable the House to proceed with the second reading of the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 29(1) suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I certainly want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Opposition for allowing me to go short on this Bill, moving one, two, and three readings in the same sitting. They obviously recognise the importance of this Bill and the benefits that it will behold to individuals that are awaiting kidney transplantation.

BILL**SECOND READING****HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026**

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, end-stage renal disease has a profound impact on a person's health, quality of life and ability to participate fully in our community. Because local health insurance finances the majority of care in Bermuda, the level of coverage available to an individual largely determines which renal replacement therapy they are able to access. The Mutual Re-insurance Fund [MRF] currently mandates coverage for three renal replacement therapies, namely, peritoneal dialysis, haemodialysis, and kidney transplantation. Peritoneal dialysis and haemodialysis are available on the Island and fully covered by the MRF.

Kidney transplantation, however, must be performed overseas, and the MRF benefit is presently capped at \$150,000 towards the total cost. Mr. Speaker, peritoneal dialysis costs approximately \$112,000 per year, and about \$1.1 million over a 10-year period, and is clinically appropriate for only a limited number of patients. Haemodialysis, on the other hand, which is the most commonly used therapy here in Bermuda, costs approximately \$135,000 annually, or \$1.4 million over 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, by comparison, kidney transplantation costs approximately \$387,000, inclusive of surgery and associated care. With an average graft survival of 10 years, this equates to an annualised cost of roughly \$38,700 and represents a savings of more than \$1 million per patient over a 10-year period, when compared with long-term haemodialysis. And for suitable candidates, transplantation is both the clinically preferred option, and the most cost-effective therapy over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, despite these clear advantages, the current mandated benefit of \$150,000, combined with supplemental insurance coverage that typically provides only approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 leaves many patients facing substantial out-of-pocket costs. These costs create a significant barrier to transplantation and result in continued reliance on dialysis therapies that are fully insured but considerably more expensive.

Mr. Speaker, there are presently 91 patients who are clinically eligible for transplant assessment. Many have indicated that anticipated out-of-pocket expenses are a major factor influencing their willingness or ability to proceed. Increasing the legislative [level] of coverage would remove this barrier, improve access to the most clinically appropriate treatment, enhance the quality of life and reduce long-term costs to the health system.

Mr. Speaker, claims data shows that the average cost of transplantation is approximately \$387,000. However, actual costs may vary depending on case management needs, patient health status, hospital market conditions, the international location of the transplant centre and whether the donor is living or deceased. The proposed amendments therefore include flexibility to adjust the prescribed coverage amount through subordinate legislation, ensuring that coverage

remains aligned with real-world costs without requiring further amendments to the Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry, I had . . . MP Cannonier was going to speak to the Bill, and he got me to sub in for him, and I had sort of forgotten he was back, and I am happy to sub in, but there we are. Anyway, we do not have much—

The Speaker: No, you both can—

Mr. Scott Pearman: We do not have a great deal to say.

The Speaker: You both can speak.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Let me just say that, you know, I am grateful to the Honourable Minister, Honourable and Learned Minister of Health, who did reach out to the Opposition, not only to invite us to agree to do this in first, second and third reading today, which we did, but also to explain that, you know, this is not just a piece of legislation. This is about someone's life. And we understand that. And, therefore, we did what we could to accommodate.

It would have been nicer, perhaps, if the Honourable Health Minister would have been able to debate this at the time of her other Bill this morning, but that's life, isn't it?

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will just say two things.

One, is that the reason behind this change makes sense, as it has been explained to me by the Ministry, and that is this: We are increasing the amount that people who are getting urgent kidney transplants, which occurs in the United States, as I understand it. But we are getting more than commensurate savings (again, as it has been explained to me) on the other end, because then once the transplant is hopefully successful, there will be a reduction in dialysis costs. And so that may be a nuanced point, but it does make a lot of sense.

And the second and further thing I would just say is that neither MP Cannonier nor I are the substantive Shadow Minister for this topic, and so the substantive Shadow Minister for Health for the OBA sits in

another place, and may well have some additional observations, but that is all we have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I take that no other Member from the Opposition . . .

Any other Member from Government?
Deputy Premier.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I declare my interest. But I would also like to thank the Minister for bringing this here to us today. And let us not lose sight of the fact that this Government, with this change, continues to put money in the pockets of the people of this country. Let alone, hopefully, not only giving longevity to life, but maybe saving a life. So, thank you, Minister, for bringing this, and I am sure that there are a lot of Bermudians who are going to be really, really appreciative.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?
Okay. Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Honourable Members for their support on this incredibly important Bill, because it will certainly benefit individuals here in Bermuda.

And as such, I would move that this Bill be committed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 10:38 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are in Committee of Whole [House] on the Bill entitled the [Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would ask that we move both clauses, please.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 provides for the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 3A of the Mutual Re-insurance Fund of the Health Insurance Act 1970 in

subsection (2E)(b) by increasing the maximum amount towards the cost of a kidney transplant from \$150,000 to \$400,000; and by inserting a new subsection (2J) to provide for the Minister responsible for Health to amend the maximum amount under subsection (2E)(b) by Order subject to the negative resolution procedure, following consultation with the Minister of Finance and the Bermuda Health Council.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be . . . clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections?

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

House resumed at 10:40 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr. Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy [Speaker].

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. The Bill has been reported as printed.

Thank you.

We will now move on. We were at the two items by the Opposition.

Are you proceeding with [Order] No. 10?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: We are, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would you like to . . . [Order] No. 10. Members, it is the second reading of the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 in the name of MP Jerion Richardson on behalf of the Opposition.

Member, would you like to present your Bill at this time?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill entitled Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

None. Continue.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

BILL

SECOND READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, this Bill is short, but the principle behind it is large. It asks this House to consider how we protect public trust when politics, public money and government appointments meet. It asks us to consider whether the law should draw a line between standing unsuccessfully for election, and being appointed shortly thereafter to a publicly funded, personal staff position outside the ordinary public service process. It asks us, in simple terms, whether public confidence is best protected by goodwill alone or whether some matters of public trust require clear rules.

I bring this Bill because I believe the answer must be clear. Public trust is not preserved merely by asking people to trust those in office. It is preserved by rules, habits, and restraints that make trust reasonable. The people of Bermuda are entitled to know that public money is not being used, and does not appear to be used, as a reward for political loyalty. They are entitled

to know that the machinery of government belongs to the people, not to any political party. And they are entitled to know that when Parliament sees a gap in public confidence, Parliament is willing to close it.

Mr. Speaker, public office is not private possession. It is not a prize. It is not a party asset. Public office is trust. Every person who sits in this Honourable House holds office because the public has placed confidence in them. That confidence, though, is not unlimited. It must be earned and renewed, not only by words but by conduct, not only by assurances but by systems, not only by intention but by restraint. Restraint matters in public life, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that a government has power does not mean that every use of that power is wise. The fact that the law permits an appointment does not mean that the appointment will command public confidence. The fact that a role may be political in nature does not mean that the public purse can be treated casually. Public money is still public money, and even when it funds political support. Public confidence is still required even when an appointment is personal to a Minister, the Premier or the Opposition Leader.

People do not lose their trust in politics all at once, Mr. Speaker. They lose it slowly. They lose it when they repeatedly see the line between party interest and public interest become blurred. They lose it when they begin to believe that connection matters more than competence. They lose it when public opportunity appears to travel through private networks, rather than open standards. And they lose it when those in power respond to concern, not with reform, but with dismissal.

That loss of trust should concern us all, Mr. Speaker. It should concern the Government. It should concern the Opposition. It should concern every Member who values this House, and every office that depends upon public confidence. It is not enough for any of us to say that our motives are pure. Government must not only act lawfully, it must act in a way that sustains the legitimacy of the system. Mr. Speaker, political parties are necessary in any democracy. Candidates are necessary in a democracy. Campaigning is necessary in a democracy. There is nothing wrong with party loyalty. There is nothing wrong with political conviction. There is nothing wrong with a person standing before the people carrying a banner advancing a platform and asking for support.

But there is a difference between a party and a government. A party may win an election, but the government it forms does not belong to the party. It belongs to the people. The public purse belongs to the people. The offices of government belong to the people. The machinery of administration belongs to the people. And appointments funded by the people must be treated with the seriousness that public money demands.

That is the distinction this Bill seeks to protect. The issue is not whether a person has political views. Everyone in this House has political views. The issue is

not whether a Minister may need advice. Ministers may need advice. The issue is not whether political offices may need support. They may. The issue is whether there should be a period of distance between an unsuccessful candidacy and appointment to a publicly funded personal staff role outside of the ordinary public service framework.

Mr. Speaker, the existing Act already recognises that personal staff appointments are sensitive. They are not ordinary public service appointments. They are publicly funded, but they are close to political office holders. They may involve political advice. They may involve media, policy, communications, or personal support for those exercising public power. They sit in a space where politics and public money meet.

That is precisely why they require transparency and restraint. When the framework for personal staff was introduced, transparency was part of the argument for it. The public was told that annual publication of appointments and remuneration would help demystify these roles. The law itself requires the Premier, by a fixed annual date, to lay reports before the Legislature identifying the personal staff, their functions, their remuneration, and, in the case of ministerial staff, whether they were appointed as experts or political advisors.

That reporting requirement was not a decorative provision. It was a safeguard. But a safeguard that arrives years late cannot fully protect trust. Transparency after the fact has value, but transparency years after the fact cannot guide public judgment when it matters. If a report that should be tabled annually is missing for years, then the public cannot see in time who is serving, what role they are serving, what they are being paid, and whether the appointments appear proper. In that circumstance, the issue is not merely administrative delay, Mr. Speaker. The issue is whether the system of accountability is working when the public needs it to work.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Honourable Member for Warwick North East, and Shadow Minister of Finance, has pressed this very issue. He has pursued the production of these personal staff reports. He has asked why reports required by law were not produced on time. He has insisted that information Parliament was promised should actually be made available to Parliament and the public. That, Mr. Speaker, is the proper work of an Opposition. It is not obstruction. It is scrutiny. It is not small politics. It is accountability.

Public reporting has confirmed the concern. Reports came belatedly before Members. Early reports remain outstanding. The statutory deadline was not met. That matters, Mr. Speaker, because this House cannot rely on transparency as the only safeguard if transparency is not timely. The public cannot be asked to wait years to understand the use of public money in roles so close to political office. That is why this Bill does not rely on reporting alone, Mr. Speaker. Reporting is important. Disclosure is important. Annual

accountability is important. But disclosure after the facts is not enough where public confidence requires a clear rule at the point of an appointment.

This Bill, therefore, moves from delayed transparency to prior restraint. It says that some appointments should not be made in the first place. Mr. Speaker, standing for election is honourable. Losing an election is not dishonourable. Anyone who places their name before the voters accepts scrutiny, pressure, and the possibility of rejection. That takes courage. I do not diminish that, and this Bill does not diminish that. But there is a mischief this Bill addresses. The mischief is not political participation. The mischief is not democratic engagement. The mischief is not public service. The mischief is the immediate movement, or perceived movement, from unsuccessful candidacy into publicly funded political employment, outside the ordinary public service process. That is the concern.

This Bill does not say that unsuccessful candidates are unqualified. It says that public confidence requires distance between the ballot paper and publicly funded appointments. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether a person was appointed because of merit, expertise, and public need, or because of recent political service to a party. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether losing an election has become a route into public employment. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether public money is being used to cushion public defeat.

Appearances matter in public life, because confidence matters, Mr. Speaker. Government depends not only on legal authority, but on public legitimacy. A system may be technically lawful and still damage trust. A decision must be explainable, and still look unfair. An appointment may be defensible in private and still corrode confidence in public. Parliament must sometimes legislate, not only against proven abuse, but against avoidable suspicion.

That is what this Bill does. It draws one clear line. It says that a person who has stood unsuccessfully in a general election or bye-election should not, for two years, be appointed to, or hold, a personal staff position under the Premier, Ministers, and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is narrow, neutral, time-limited, and enforceable. It creates a two-year cooling-off period for unsuccessful candidates. During that period, a person who stood unsuccessfully for election may not be appointed to, or hold, a personal staff appointment under the Act. The Bill applies whether the person stood as a party candidate or an Independent candidate. It applies regardless of the political party by which the person was endorsed. It applies to personal staff of the Premier, Ministers, and the Opposition Leader.

It requires a written declaration of eligibility before appointment. It creates consequences if that declaration is knowingly false. And it requires the Parliamentary Registrar to keep the records necessary to

verify whether a person falls within the rule. That is not excessive, Mr. Speaker. It is not a lifetime ban. It is not a ban on employment. It is not a ban on public service. It is not a ban on political belief. It is a cooling-off period for one narrow category of publicly funded political appointments.

Two years is measured. A permanent restriction would go too far. A restriction so short that it had no practical effect would not address the concern. Two years is long enough to break the immediate link between an unsuccessful candidacy and a personal staff appointment, and short enough to respect the ability of individuals to return to eligibility.

The Bill also contains practical safeguards, Mr. Speaker. A declaration must be made, records must be available, the rule can be checked. It is not left to rumour, speculation or political argument. The law should be clear enough that no Minister, no Premier, no Opposition Leader, and no proposed appointee is left guessing. That is good governance.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear about what the Bill does not do. It does not stop anyone from joining a political party. It does not stop anyone from campaigning. It does not stop anyone from standing for election. It does not stop anyone from supporting a candidate. It does not stop anyone from holding political views. It does not stop anyone from applying for ordinary public service employment through the proper process. It does not impose a permanent ban. It does not target one party. It does not punish participation in democracy.

It protects democracy from the appearance of patronage. That distinction is important. If someone wishes to serve Bermuda through public service, let them apply through the public service process. If someone has expertise, let that expertise be tested through an appropriate route. If someone wishes to continue contributing to public life, there are many ways to do so. But this particular route, Mr. Speaker, the immediate appointment to publicly funded personal staff after an unsuccessful election campaign should be closed for a reasonable period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance brings this Bill forward as a matter of principle. Not as a rule for one side only, not as a rule for one government only, not as a rule for one controversy only. The Bill binds the Opposition Leader as well as the Premier and Ministers. This is deliberate. If we are going to speak about standards, then those standards must bind us too. It is easy to call for integrity when the rule applies only to one's opponents. It is harder and more important to write a rule that applies to all of us. That is what this Bill does.

A future Opposition Leader could not use a personal staff appointment to give an immediate, publicly funded role to an unsuccessful OBA candidate. A future OBA Government could not use these appointments in the way the Bill seeks to prevent. A future government of any party would be subject to the same rule. A future

Independent candidate would be subject to the same rule. That is not a weakness of the Bill; it is the point of the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Integrity is not a slogan. Transparency is not a press release. Accountability is not something we remember only when convenient. They must be built into rules. The OBA is prepared to be bound by the rule it proposes. That is the standard we should set.

Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that some Honourable Members may say that political advisors are supposed to be political, and yes, they are. But publicly funded political roles still require integrity safeguards. The fact that a role is political does not mean the public interest disappears.

Some may say that reporting already exists. Yes, it does. But reporting has not been enough. Late disclosure does not prevent an appointment. A report years later does not protect confidence at the time when the concern arises. Reporting tells the public what happened.

This Bill prevents a narrow category of appointments that should not happen during the cooling-off period. Some say that this Bill is partisan. It is not. It applies to Government and Opposition. It applies to party candidates and Independents. It applies regardless of party endorsement, and it applies now and in the future.

Some may say that this discourages people from standing for election. It does not. A person may stand, a person may still campaign, a person may still support a party, a person may still seek public employment through the ordinary processes. The Bill simply says that unsuccessful candidacies should not be followed immediately by this narrow category of publicly funded personal appointments.

And some may say that the Bill is unnecessary, Mr. Speaker. If public trusts were not at risk, perhaps that argument would carry more weight. But we all know the state of public confidence in politicians. We all hear the public frustration. We all hear the suspicion that politics looks after its own. We can either pretend that concern is not real, or we can take one practical step to answer it.

If this Bill is read a second time and committed to Committee, I will approach that stage constructively. If Honourable Members have technical amendments to improve the Bill without weakening its purpose, I will consider them. If there are drafting improvements, let us examine them. If there are refinements that make the Bill clearer, stronger, or more workable, let us consider them at the proper stage.

But technical criticism should not be used to avoid the principle. The question today is the principle. The details can be improved. The lines should not be erased, though. The principle is straightforward. Unsuccessful candidates should not move directly into publicly funded personal staff appointments outside of the ordinary public service process.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will not solve every problem of patronage in Bermuda. It will not answer every

concern about procurement. It will not address every board appointment. It will not restore public trust by itself. But it draws one clear line.

Mr. Speaker, it says that public office is a trust. It says that public money is not party money. It says that the machinery of government must not appear to become a reward system for political loyalty. Mr. Speaker, it says that transparency years late is not enough. It says that where public confidence requires restraint, Parliament should write that restraint into law.

Mr. Speaker, the public is entitled to expect that we will protect the integrity of the offices we hold. They are entitled to expect that the rules will not simply rely on goodwill. They are entitled to expect that when a gap appears, Parliament will close it.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill closes one gap. It does so modestly. It does so fairly. It does so equally. And it does so in a way that binds both the Opposition as well as the Government. Mr. Speaker, that is the principle of this Bill. And that is the principle I ask this Honourable House to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of you, I can assure you I will not be as long as the Honourable Member who just took his seat.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Hon. E. David Burt: Just to, I will lead—

The Speaker: I am sure all will appreciate that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I will certainly lead on behalf of the Government on this particular matter. But [I] just want to make sure to correct the record, because the Honourable Member who just took his seat said when the Bill was first brought, it contained transparency provisions. It did not. The Bill did not contain transparency provisions. Transparency was only added in there in 2018 or 2019 by this Government when we amended and updated the Bill. The Premier, [Ministers] and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act existed long before. It was an invention of the late Sir John Swan.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah!

Hon. E. David Burt: He already appointed personal staff and there was no transparency provisions in there whatsoever. And the only way that you found out about it is by asking a parliamentary question, which you still have the opportunity to do.

But let me consider it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government will vote against this Bill, and

we will do so without hesitation. And I listened to the Honourable Member speak for a long time, and I am still trying to understand what the problem is that he is trying to solve. It is though that this Bill is a solution in search of a problem. And my job, and my training [for] years as an IT project manager, and as someone who analyses requirements, it is always going to: *What is the problem that you are trying to solve?* I am not certain of the problem that he is trying to solve.

Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, it is a bad solution. It is without question, poorly targeted. It is retrospective in its effect, if you could possibly imagine that. That, you know, passing this Bill and all of a sudden other persons may, you know, *whatever you were doing, you are not going to do anymore*. And even though the Honourable Member does not think so, I think it is without question fundamentally hostile to political participation.

But let me be clear about what this Bill says. It says that if a Bermudian has the courage to put their name on a ballot, go before the people, and does not win, that person should be prohibited from serving as a political advisor for two years. Now, let that sink in. Not because they committed misconduct. Not because they were dishonest. Not because they are unqualified. Their offence, Mr. Speaker, their disqualifying factor is they stood for an election and lost. That is nonsense.

And here is what makes the least amount of sense, Mr. Speaker. Under this Bill, someone can manage a political campaign, someone can run the party organisation, someone can work behind the scenes,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah! Ah!

Hon. E. David Burt: —someone can raise all the money, someone can do all the types of stuff inside the party, do everything; advise candidates, participate in every aspect of politics, and remain perfectly eligible for appointment. But if you then decide to put your name forward and lose the answer is no. A nonsense, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am uncertain of the problem that the Opposition is trying to solve.

So, I am not going to spend too much time on this, Mr. Speaker, because I know that other persons do. I think it is important to note, and understand, that the construct of special advisors, political advisors, expert advisors is not new. Personal staffs, as I said, were brought into law under the late Sir John Swan. Those things were expanded, used, they became formalised underneath the Ministerial Code of Conduct, which was put in place (I want to say) in 1999, which allows Ministers to appoint up to two advisors. There were further transparency measures that were brought in along of the time. But the important thing to note, Mr. Speaker . . . and it is also important to note that special advisors were always allowed under these particular Acts. They just were not fully governed under these particular Acts.

And so, what we did is we made sure that there was a broader governance around them. But again, the existing law already provides that Ministers may

appoint experts in their professional fields, or advisors. These appointments must be made in writing. Conflicts of interest were considered. All persons do serve terms of, codes of conduct, because there are codes of conduct, that are applying to these particular matters, and we know that there is reporting on these, whether through parliamentary question or through annual reporting. So, we all know, Mr. Speaker, that the framework is transparent.

But this Bill does not strengthen those safeguards. It does not improve the standards, and it does not require qualifications. It does not do anything to enhance performance management. All it says is that if you run and you lose, you cannot have this particular job. It is, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, a nonsense.

Political advisors, or special advisors, or in the United Kingdom—SpAds, as they are commonly called too—are not some strange invention of the United Kingdom Government . . . or, sorry, the Bermuda Government. They exist throughout Westminster systems, whether it is Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other places. And the United Kingdom Cabinet Office describes special advisors as a critical part of the teams that are supporting Ministers. They work alongside professional civil servants, while providing the political advice that civil servants quite properly cannot provide.

So, to listen to the Honourable Member, he says that, you know, you should run for political office, and if you lose political office, then you should, already being tainted, then go ahead and apply for a position of public service, but you cannot apply for a position of public service after a run for office unless you have a cooling-off period that already exists. So, he is almost defeating his own argument, Mr. Speaker. And from that perspective and dimension is nonsense. As of March this year, the United Kingdom Government employed 159 different special advisors. I think we have got about 12 here.

But the reality is that they serve a useful purpose, Mr. Speaker. And why? Because there is a difference between political advice and public service advice. There is a difference. The public service must remain impartial, and Ministers who are elected to implement a political programme, it is entirely legitimate for Ministers to seek political advice on how that programme is developed. And I cannot imagine . . . well, I mean, remember, he is not excusing people who work inside of parties and all the rest, so clearly, Ministers want persons that they know they can trust to give them political advice that is aligned with their political views. And who else is better to do that than people who work in political parties or, Mr. Speaker, people who may put themselves forward for office.

But here is what's also important, and this is the sinister part about this for me, because I know, Mr. Speaker, that I served as a political advisor in my time. I started in 2010 until 2012. I know there are a number of Members behind me who served as a political

advisor under different administrations and different things. And the reality is that these roles also provide an important opportunity for Bermudians to learn how government actually functions. People learn how policies develop. They learn how legislation is prepared. They learn how Cabinets solve government work. They learn how Ministers. They learn the difference between making a promise and navigating the practical financial legal work required to deliver it, Mr. Speaker. They do this particular work.

And the reality is that this type of work, this type of exposure, produces better candidates, better parliamentarians, ultimately better leaders, and better Ministers for the country. That is the reality. And so, and so, it is—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, you can say as you wish. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that what this Bill is doing is basically saying: *Put yourself up and lose, no, no, no, but please feel free to work behind the scenes, whatever you need to do, all the rest, and then, yes, you are okay.*” It makes no sense.

And, Mr. Speaker, consider the retrospective effect, which is the most sinister part of this Bill. A person who may already be holding a legitimate appointment, performing valuable work already, and have done absolutely nothing wrong—absolutely nothing wrong—under this Bill, that appointment would be ended automatically. No assessment of performance, no evidence of wrongdoing, no consideration of public interest, just automatic dismissal. That is not good governance, Mr. Speaker. That is not good governance.

So again, I hope when the Honourable Member, former Leader of the Opposition, gets an opportunity to respond, he can try to tell us the actual problem that he is trying to solve, because it is difficult to understand the problem which he is trying to solve. The reality is that there is a limit to the number of special advisors that exist. That is something that is codified in the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Those persons are put into particular roles, decided by Ministers, under budgets that are approved by this particular Legislature.

And just so Honourable Ministers have an understanding of the way these particular matters work, they are governed by the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Ministers must write in to the Premier for approval. I will go ahead and review those particular items. I will then say: *This person is appropriate, yes; or appropriate, no.* Not every single political advisor that a Minister wants to hire that is given a yes. That is the reality. And there is the accountability matrix. And that is political accountability. And so, if Members have a question about who is appointed, and if they have something, they can come here, they can ask the parliamentary question, they can get up on the floor, they can do whatever it is. The accountability matrix of Parliament is the way in which it works.

But then to say that we are going to say: *No, you cannot do this, this, this, if you have done that.* It is a nonsense, Mr. Speaker. And that is why it will not be supported from this side. This Government will not support political gatekeeping, which is dressed up as reform. We are not going to support legislation that discourages Bermudians from standing in an election, and we are not going to pretend that electoral defeat is evidence of corruption, incompetence, or unfitness for any form of public service.

This House should legislate against wrongdoing. It should not legislate, Mr. Speaker, against losing. And for this reason, this Government will vote this unnecessary, illogical, and fundamentally misguided Bill down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP DeCouto, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must admit, I thought the Premier was going to go short, but I guess he is got his energy back. I find it incredibly rich that the Premier would think he could get up here and lecture this House about accountability, when he is breaking the law by failing to provide three years of missing reports.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

This is what we are doing again?

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah!—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Required by law.

The Speaker: Ah! Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

You raised a point of order?

[No audible response.]

The Speaker: You raised a point of order.

An Hon. Member: What is it?

The Speaker: No, no, it was a point of order. I was trying to sit the Member.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading, Imputing improper motive]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, point of order, whether it is on the matters of misleading the House, or matters that relate to imputing improper motive, the Honourable Member cannot accuse the Government of not following the law, Mr. Speaker.

On this particular point, I have explained the position very clearly. We have filed the last three years'

reports. There are two years' reports that are going back in time. If the Honourable Member wants to go ahead and pose a parliamentary question on those particular matters, he is more than welcome to do so. I have judged and I have stated on numerous occasions that I do judge that it is not in the best interest.

Do you know what happens?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We can have . . . no, here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. We can have public servants go and run and find old items, or we can bring justice reform Bills and other Bills to this country. That is the way that I do. And so,—

An Hon. Member: Oh! Wow!

Hon. E. David Burt: —the Honourable Members may wish to do things.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: The reality is that that is it. So, the Honourable Member cannot get up, impute improper motives and accuse myself of breaking the law when he himself full well knows that I do not prepare those reports, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Before you resume your feet, I know this matter has come up numerous times. And I think we have exhausted it because the position that the Premier just stated has been repeatedly stated over and over again. And I think that we can move forward without having to keep going back down that same road, because the answer has been given as to how, why, et cetera, et cetera. The issue that you raise has been addressed the way it is been addressed. Okay?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your guidance. I will carry on with my main point. But let me say this. The law provides no provision for the Premier to decide whether or not he provides those reports. And he has not provided those reports. It is a short Bill. Anybody can read it. If he does not wish to hear about it, he can provide those reports. I do not care about his explanation, frankly. It is not relevant.

The Speaker: I'm, I'm—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But anyway, he wants to know—

The Speaker: I am trying to move us forward and not have to keep going back down this road on this matter.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am sure you have got more you can present in your presentation and we can—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, well, I must admit the Premier must . . . I guess being Premier for a while, I think he may be a little bit out of touch with people. Because if he wants to understand what is the problem that this Bill solves, let me explain it to him, to this House. Let me readjust my tone and my . . . let me explain it to this House.

The Speaker: Explain it to the House, yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, earlier I talked about trust, and how, in my view, and people that talk to us talk about a lack of trust in the Government. There is a high level of cynicism in the public about how Government operates. Now, you might say: *Well, that is not unique to Bermuda.* Okay. And I will give you that. But it is very high in Bermuda right now.

This Bill uses the concept of a cooling off period. This is a very common concept used in a lot of places. It is a good idea. And it makes sense because the cynicism, what people are seeing, they are looking and they are saying: *Huh. Ace boy ran over there, didn't make it, and they got this cushy little job over here. Ace girl, same thing.* And they look around and they see all these people. *Oh, I get it. If I put my hand up to take one for the team, I'm going to go get a cushy little job running around with the—*

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Premier—Mr. Speaker, point of information.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Or, point of order, sorry.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Owen Darrell: The Honourable Member from the other side is imputing improper motive when he keeps using the term “cushy little job.” I find it extremely disrespectful for individuals who are working extremely hard.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that he withdraw the statements of describing hard-working individuals [receiving] “cushy little jobs.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I did not say these jobs like that, Mr. Speaker. I am just relaying the kinds of commentary that I [hear] out there in the public. So, I appreciate what the gentleman is saying. But, you know, this is what people think.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This is what I am exactly what I mean by cynicism. It does not even have to be correct. And we know, Mr. Speaker, there is the concept of avoiding even the appearance of impropriety. And they say—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.

Let your comments be not so . . . What am I trying to say here? Not so . . . almost demeaning of a process that was in place long before others, long before this Government came in, and they had these roles before. If you want to tighten up on it, talk to how you want to tighten up, but you do not have to be demeaning of those who participate in it.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. . . . well, I do want to tighten up. Because when the general public has a cynicism, we have to avoid even the appearance of impropriety by going above and beyond. It is like saying, if you are a judge, you cannot just go have lunch with whoever you want. It might be okay. You might just be talking golf. But someone might look at that and draw a conclusion.

And you have to make it clear to the public that everything is above board, because the public has developed a lack of trust and it will take extra work to get it back. And that . . . if the Premier does not understand that, because that was his question and I'm responding to his question, I don't really know what else to say.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: People would . . . people . . . this is, these are things . . . these are the worst people. *Oh, it is a friends and family plan. Or, jobs for the boys and girls.* And what we are trying to do is just take that variable out of it and it will reflect better on everybody.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And then people will know. Hey, the people who do these advisory roles, they will have more confidence in them. It will be clear to them why they have those roles. And those people will not be judged unfairly by the public who, as I mentioned, has developed this . . . this . . . this tone of cynicism. And the lack of accountability and transparency in these areas is not helping.

I do not want to . . . I do not want to touch that again. I think I have made my point.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this Bill because it will help people feel more confident in what is going on with the operations of their Government at a time of deep cynicism and mistrust.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . Minister Rabain.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Again, repeating what the Premier said, there is absolutely no way that anyone in good conscience can stand there and accept what probably harkens us back to a dark age. A dark age in the development of this country. Where it was very well known that if you supported a particular party, you would have a very hard time finding employment, getting a job, buying a house and doing all of those things, Mr. Speaker. And I realise, Mr. Speaker, what are we really doing here? As the Premier said, we are looking for a problem. We are looking for a problem to find . . . to find . . . we are coming up with a solution that there is no actual problem for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite that brought this Bill said something very interesting. He said: *This is not a partisan Bill.* Those are his exact words. I will wait for the point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I have never known a bipartisan Bill that has never reached across the aisle to say: *Let's talk about what we are doing so we can have common ground before we come to this House.* How can that be a nonpartisan [*sic*] Bill, Mr. Speaker? He has tabled this Bill without asking anyone: *What are your thoughts on this?* If he truly wanted to bring something here that was bipartisan, he would have reached across the aisle before he tabled this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have Members opposite speaking about the illegality of not submitting reports on time that are required by Parliament. Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is go back to the One Bermuda Alliance era and realise that 2014/15 WEDCO reports were not submitted on time. [In] 2014/15 and 2016 BHB reports were not submitted on time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Uh-oh! Uh-oh!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Regulatory Authority for 2014/15 and 2016 were not submitted on time.

An Hon. Member: No, no!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The regulatory . . . the regular . . . the National Training Board reports [were] not submitted in 2016 and 2017. And do you know when those reports were submitted, Mr. Speaker? After they lost the Government and the PLP came into power.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh my! Oh my!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, we can sit here . . . we are . . . but, Mr. Speaker, I am not speaking about that because I am trying to throw shade.

We have been here long enough to know that these reports are compiled by public servants, and

sometimes there are issues that go wrong that do not allow them to be reported. That is . . . that is common. And so, I am not going to use that to beat them on the back like the Member opposite who just took his seat refuses to stop trying to beat the Premier with. Because he is trying to make a point, because he is trying to stoke division in this country. By quoting what he said: *friends and family benefits for unqualified persons*, Mr. Speaker. *Cushy jobs*, Mr. Speaker. This is the type of things he does.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Minister, I have no doubt, is inadvertently imputing improper motive.

The Speaker: Put your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I know the Minister is inadvertently imputing improper motive because for a Member of this House to get up here and demand that a Minister carries out their duties under the law to provide information to this House is not stoking—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —is not stoking anything. And to relay what the public is saying to me again is not stoking anything. This is what people are saying. I do not make this up, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

The Speaker: All right. You expressed that when you were on your feet before.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I was speaking about an actual statement he made, *cushy jobs*, Mr. Speaker. That is offensive. It is. *Cushy little jobs*. That is offensive. Reminds me of someone else who made a statement and called someone in this House *a wonderful little boy*.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: That is . . . that is the mentality that we are dealing with here today, Mr. Speaker, that harks—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —that harks from a past that we thought had been buried by now, Mr. Speaker. But

when you grew up in that . . . in that . . . in that era, you cannot change yourself, Mr. Speaker. You cannot change your spots.

But, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's history teaches us to be cautious about political participation when it comes linked to employment opportunities. Many Bermudians, especially Black Bermudians, grew up hearing stories of how political affiliation could affect your ability to just operate in this country. So whatever political views we have, the lesson from that period is that no citizen should fear consequences because they choose to participate in the political process, Mr. Speaker.

And as the Premier mentioned, why does this Bill draw the line at candidates, Mr. Speaker? And make me, and . . . and . . . and . . . and I will be I will be pleased,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased if they could explain how the staff for the Opposition Leader has been instrumental in every One Bermuda Alliance election. Every single one of them—instrumental.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But they get hired. Why aren't people like that on this list? Why aren't people like that on this list, Mr. Speaker? Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this Bill is to stoke division. That is my opinion. To stoke division amongst the people of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

There is only one . . . there is, Mr. Speaker, there is only one Government that has ever been accused of the friends and family plan, Mr. Speaker. One Government. Amazingly, that fell away. Amazingly, that fell away when the One Bermuda Alliance was in power. Amazingly, it fell away. And all we have to do is look at the farcical, the farcical folly they went on trying to accuse Dr. Brown in Boston, Mr. Speaker. And who did they have working behind him? A political ally that did a whole lot of work for them behind the scenes, got hired up to push that prosecution forward, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: You didn't hear friends and family there, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Previously, I brought to this House when we talked about the things that were done,

and we did a comparison of how much money went out to . . . how much money went out to the legal firms under the One Bermuda Alliance. Far outstripped what the what the PLP had paid over the same period.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That was family.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But there was no friends and family accused of that, Mr. Speaker. No friends and family accused there because, Mr. Speaker, as to quote, Mr. Speaker, as to quote, our late friend, and late great Member of this party: *For some reason, the White man's ice is colder.*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, yes, sir.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Mr. Speaker, good legislation should involve the people responsible for administering it. The fact that when I reached out to the Parliamentary Registrar to say: *What is your opinion on this Bill?* Because, yes, Mr. Speaker, we could have raised a similar argument that we talked about earlier,—

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —because this Bill requires the Parliamentary Registrar to create a registry, keep . . . keep and follow that registry of all the people who have run to say they have been off, they have now . . . they have not been employed for two years, so now they can go, Mr. Speaker. When I reached out to her to say: *Can I have your opinion on that?* Her words were: *This the first time I have ever seen this.*

So, we talk about collaboration, Mr. Speaker. You talk about collaboration, it is not there. You do not draft a Bill, and then just show up one day and table it, and then say it is bipartisan.

An Hon. Member: Like the Health Bill today.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Well, Mr. . . . and not to reflect on earlier debates, but I do remember kudos coming from that side of the Government about the conversations they had with the Minister who brought it, who brought it, and they were so grateful, and they supported it, and we will just leave it there, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, no, no, we had two Bills today that you supported, that you said: *I am grateful for the, for the Minister who reached out and talked to us.* And so we were able to move forward with it, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, Ministers are already required to consider conflicts of interest with

appointments. The Ministerial Code sets this clear of what the expectations are regarding integrity and accountability and transparency. If there are concerns with appointments, we should strengthen that transparency, not restrict participation in democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, the greatest concern I have about this Bill is what it sends to the next generation. We constantly say we want more young people to get involved in the political process. We encourage them to participate, and we share their ideas to challenge us, to even put their names on ballots. But yet this Bill tells them that if they bother to step into that political arena, and they run in an election, and they are unsuccessful, opportunities that would be otherwise open to them will be closed for two years. How fair is that, Mr. Speaker? How fair is that to tell someone you are only—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: How fair is that, Mr. Speaker?

And we hear the chirping: *Are we going to give those opportunities to Opposition candidates?*

Mr. Speaker, I struck a partisan . . . a bipartisan board to examine electoral reform. There are . . . there are Opposition Members on that, Opposition failed candidates, on that board.

Some Hon. Members: Ah! Ah!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: There are Independent failed candidates on that board, Mr. Speaker. Right? So, they have been offered, they have been offered on that board and, yes, Mr. Speaker, there is a stipend that they will be paid for doing that work—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh! Oh!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And because I went . . . because true bipartisanship is reaching across the aisles, I have shown that it happens, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: That's the problem they are trying to solve.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Mr. Speaker, we are sending the wrong message by passing this Bill. Future leaders of Bermuda do not begin as Ministers or Members of Parliament, Mr. Speaker. Many will start as researchers, advisors, campaign volunteers, constituency workers, or members of a Minister's team. That is the experience that helps them to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to service our country effectively. The existing staffing framework specifically recognises the roles of political advisors,

Mr. Speaker, and allows them to support Ministers, and the Opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, instead of passing Bills that restrict employment opportunities, we should be encouraging young Bermudans to put themselves out there, participate in the political process, run for office, knowing that they will not be punished for doing so, Mr. Speaker. Democracy is strongest when citizens are willing to step forward. It is strongest when young people believe that public service is a pathway for opportunity and not a risk. Losing an election should never mean a loss of opportunity in employment, Mr. Speaker. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally will never support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I echo the Minister who just took his seat. I felt it necessary to take a page out of the late Dame Lois Browne-Evans' book and go down memory lane. And as this Bill targets failed candidates, Mr. Speaker, and whilst to the time I am referring, I was not a Progressive Labour Party Member or supporter . . . I have many relatives and many close friends who were. But it was, truth be told . . . Mr. Speaker, I know that you can verify what I am going to say. Persons like Mr. Howard Saltus, persons like Ms. Aurelia Burch, persons who would have stood up and represented the Progressive Labour Party in seats that were traditionally UBP, did so at tremendous personal cost. Persons who actually stood up and put their name forward, even just to be vocal, and canvassed on behalf, did so at great personal sacrifice, Mr. Speaker.

So, I think when we bring Bills like this and when we make references to candidates, we have to be sensitive in this country that a lot of what we think has been erased still is very prevalent in the mind-set of this country, in the ethos of this country. And I cannot support that.

I understand Oppositions are there trying to tickle up the Government, but sometimes you have to be mindful and respectful.

And let me say this, in that it cheapens the fact that we all have had the experience of trying to get quality candidates to come forward and represent. You know, in this last election, love him or hate him, the late Sir John Swan was able to excite a number of Independents to come forward.

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And in the name of democracy, as one who at 25 years old came forward and stood at the polls to serve this country in 1983, that takes a lot of courage to do so. So, I salute anyone,

anyone who decides to run for any party or as an Independent. And I take great offence to a Bill that would target someone in that space. I really would.

I mean, it is not to say that an Independent might not, after a few months or so, decide, *I think I will support one party or another*. But to target them in such a way, I think is irresponsible, if only in the name of trying to score some political points. And that is how this has come across to me.

And you know what concerns me is week after week, I hear persons—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —imputing—

The Speaker: Point—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: That just—

The Speaker: Wait—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes.

The Speaker: Member, just—what is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, the Honourable Member was imputing improper motive for bringing the Bill.

The Speaker: Um . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: The Member is indicating you are bringing improper motives for what you indicated for why the Bill was brought.

I am trying to . . .

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I can . . . I can say I was certainly not trying to impute improper motive in my, in my dissertation. What I was trying to say, express, is that I feel that the Opposition may be inadvertently imputing improper motives on persons who are offering themselves for candidacy.

And that's what I find bothersome. Particularly . . . particularly the . . . as I mentioned, the historical construct of this country. And it's real.

And let me say this. Run for conservative UBP or OBA and see how easy it would be to get a job in the private sector.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh! Talk about it!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is the truth, Ruth!

Hon. E. David Burt: Talk about it!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Right?
And conversely—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —offer yourself. Go work for Lombardi or somebody like that and then decide you are going to be a PLP candidate and find out how hard it is to get a job in the private sector in this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And I am looking at a Member right in front of me—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —a friend of mine who experienced that same thing in modern day.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: A man who worked in international business. But you know what? When he wasn't a Minister in 2012, or so, was out there in another field, in social work, driving a truck. That's the type of Bermuda we still live in today. And when you come with Bills like that and inadvertently, or deliberately, impugn the integrity of persons willing to offer themselves for high office—an office that you should be proud to hold—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —and should be proud that everyone in this country would want to hold the same office, then you raise the bar of where we sit and stand.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm. Talk about it.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I spent my whole life, from 14 years old at The Berkeley looking at every Member of this House that ever served that was a relative of mine. And they represented every party in this country at that time. From the Ratterays right down to the Hodgsons, to the Halls, to the Borrows. Proud of them.

Stanley Morton, my good cousin, stopped me there and said, *Keep writing those letters to the editor. Don't worry, they're gonna treat you a little bit differently now that you're prepared to speak out, even though you're UBP.* That's true!

And let me tell you this, Mr. Speaker, that's the truth. So, when the [Opposition] feels that, *Hey I can tickle up the Government—*

An Hon. Member: Tickle them up.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —be mindful of the history of this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Be mindful of the sensitivity, and be mindful that you can come to Bermuda from overseas and retire and enjoy a wonderful life, and you can give your life's service in this country and not enjoy the same Bermuda that others, who come from overseas, do. Why? Because we are still living in an unequal country. And until every Member of this House appreciates the real truth of this country, we are going to continue to be marred by that. Marred by the sadness of what Mr. Howard Saltus, my good friend who ran in 1968, who still comes to CC because he cares.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Right? Still the legacy of all those persons, Wales's in the East End, who would have stood, Louis Ming's and all those persons who would have stood.

And I will never forget this, my good friend, the late Jimmy Williams. For a long time, persons didn't know Jimmy was UBP or PLP. He was very middle of the road. And he didn't serve long before he passed away. May he rest in peace.

But he used to tell me, *Kim, it's a little bit different when you make that choice and decide to run PLP, you know.* Right? And we used to meet very regularly down in St. George's over lunch to talk about . . . because my mentor Mr. Terry Brennan said, *you need to know certain people and get to know them and they will share with you what's important about business and what's important about the community.*

And so, I am imploring the Opposition, come with your Motions, come with your Bills, come with your attacks, but be mindful that within this country, the construct, that many in their circles of friends would pretend doesn't exist, I am here to say, and I have been saying it since I was 25 years old, what Martin Luther King, [Jr.] fought for, we still must fight for in this country today, because much has not gone away.

It is like Bermuda grass, it sits dormant under 68 degrees and when the climate gets a certain warmth, it shines and shows its ugly head.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Would any other Member . . . MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I planned to speak to this one.

An Hon. Member: Oh, yes.

Another Hon. Member: Nice.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get to travel to places and talk to people, and they ask about the politics in Bermuda, inevitably. And I tell them certain things. And then I tell them the history of the politics in Bermuda. And they are somewhat flabbergasted when I tell them about the rampant discrimination that this Island has gone through, how one party controlled the country, basically up until 1998. All right?

And I tell them how when my mama tried to get a job, she couldn't get it because she was Black. My daddy couldn't get a job because he was Black. And they are like, *No, that shouldn't happen*. They are almost like flabbergasted, you know, shocked.

And then I actually show them newspaper clippings of things from the 1960s and 1970s, and so on, so it is no longer my opinion, it's the facts.

An Hon. Member: The facts.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And they say, *Well, I guess those days are over now*.

I say, *Let me explain something. In Bermuda, the reality is that we are a divided country. The Blacks, for lack of a better term, control the politics and the non-Blacks control the economy*.

[They say,] *So how does that work in the long run?*

An Hon. Member: Not good.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I say, *Well, it makes many Blacks not want to even think about politics*, because if they have gone away and got their career, whatever, (right?), Master's degree, they are like, *I am not getting involved in politics*.

And both sides have seen, but especially our side, that many Black professionals don't want to get involved in politics. Not because politics is inevitably bad, but it's going to be bad for their career—like terrible.

Mr. Speaker, when I first ran in 2016, 2017, people were like saying to me, *Hey, you sure you know about this, bye? Because you could lose your job at BELCO*.

I was prepared to lose my job at BELCO. I would have been all right. But many others would not have been. Why? Because there is a mind-set that if you run for the PLP, against the establishment, that's going to affect your professional career, your income levels, so on and so forth.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I didn't get, . . . I got no promotion, mate. I got a demotion . . . got stifled.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes you have to look at the individual and you have to look at the intent. And I want to say that the individual that brought this Bill, I have a lot of respect for—

An Hon. Member: Hey, there you go.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —for that individual.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

An Hon. Member: Very specific.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I look at the intent.

I say, *Well, is he intentionally trying to bring a discriminatory Bill?* I don't know. I don't think so. I will wait for him to point of order if he wants to.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Then I look at the institution which the Bill is coming from, and I am saying, *Well, maybe it's not his intent*. But it's definitely that institutional mind-set that these things are going to come along and cause discriminatory practices.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sit here and I don't know. There's not much I could add to Honourable Diallo Rabain, the Premier, or Kim Swan. But what I can say is [that] if this is a publicity stunt, in which they are going to say tomorrow, *the OBA tried to bring a Bill that brought . . . to bring transparency and the PLP voted against it*, I know the script is already written.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The script is already written.

An Hon. Member: They are going for it.

Another Hon. Member: *The PLP voted against it*.

Mr. Christopher Famous: They are the . . . some media, I won't call any names, is already waiting to hit that "send" button right now.

An Hon. Member: They are going for it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Because this . . . they knew . . . they knew that this Bill would never pass—

An Hon. Member: When they tabled it.

Mr. Christopher Famous: When they tabled it. So, the intent . . . is it discrimination or is it headlines? I am suspecting they are looking for headlines, because they know we would not vote for discrimination.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I say, Mr. Speaker, I join in the chorus line that says, *My voice will say "no" to this Bill*. Because I don't want my children or my grandchildren ever to think, *Daddy* (Grandpa, Papa, whatever), *I would have ran for PLP, but all that money you spent sending me to school might go to waste. Because I can't get a job in town if I put my name next to the PLP.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to make a contribution?

MP Robinson.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening . . . good night!

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, good night . . . or, good morning.

Several Hon. Members: Good morning.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good morning. Yes.

The Speaker: Almost morning again.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, I will be brief. I know we have been here for a while, and what I would like to say is . . . given my entrance into politics at 23 years old, I actually started out as a cashier. Right? And the reason why I am bringing this forward is because this . . . this—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I did, I did, yes, I did, I actually . . . I actually lost it right over there, yes.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, this is what I am saying.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I said . . . well, let me . . . let me be clear—

Several Hon. Members: Whoa!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Let me be clear, let me be clear. I was . . . I was, yes, I was appointed to the Senate. And then I was unappointed. And I did it for . . . did

politics for free for three years. And so it . . . that is how it happens.

What I wanted to get up and say is that I think that it used to be—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It used to be a place where, obviously, it was skewed. But I want to speak to a wider issue that I think a lot of people are facing on both sides of the aisle. The fact that, you know, employment in the country is hard when you are a politician.

I could tell you—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Or an ex-politician.

I mean, when you have an affinity, or you declare yourself as an affiliate of either side, it can be hard for you to be looked at as impartial in certain roles.

I mean, I went and retooled myself, it took me six years to make a leap to another career. And that was mainly because folks felt as though I couldn't commit as much to a job because of the responsibilities that I held in this House, and to my constituents.

And so, I am not dismissing what my colleagues on the other side are saying about being discriminated against for being PLP candidates. But I will say that in this modern era it is kind of universal. I mean, you talk to FDM [Free Democratic Movement], you talk to Independents, you talk to anyone who ran in the last election, and all of them have felt repercussions for declaring their interest for a political—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, my point to this Bill is this. Right? There are avenues in which those folks can enter politics without a direct political advisor role. I mean, you take into account the fact that a few folks have lost on the Progressive Labour Party side at one point to Senators and [were] made Ministers. That's how the system works, right? And that is not something that we are looking to stifle. That's not something that we are looking to cut off.

And the reason why I will say that I support this Bill is because, at the end of the day, there are still many avenues in which a person can get involved in politics. But what I do want to say is that we can acknowledge that we should definitely look at protecting and strengthening being a politician in this country when it comes to employment.

And I think that is another conversation to have, because I can tell you right now, as somebody who's in my 30s, not a lot of my colleagues or friends or people in my age bracket are looking to get involved in politics because they know it will threaten their employment. And that is from all stripes.

You know, I grew up in a PLP family. So, I have cousins and, you know, and uncles—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —and uncles on that side of the aisle. And I know, I know that there is definitely a stigma from that side of it.

But also, being an OBA member and experiencing the fact that I was kind of stuck in a position where I couldn't move around, or couldn't gain additional employment despite bettering myself, I have seen both sides of the fence. So, I wouldn't diminish that.

But what we have to take into account is public opinion. And all of us hear it on the doorstep, *Oh, you politicians are lining your pockets. You guys, . . . you know, you hear it. And it doesn't just . . . you don't get it from just PLP doors or OBA doors. You get it universally. Folks assume . . . I remember I was reading a comment about myself and how I went to private school and had been born with a silver spoon. Meanwhile, I never touched a private school. You know, Somerset Primary, Sandys and CedarBridge Academy. But these are the preconceived notions of—*

An Hon. Member: [INAUDIBLE] silver spoon was from that fellow sitting in front of you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Which one?

An Hon. Member: Yes, which one?

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Because—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I will answer that, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Stay focused.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: But I am not going to engage that—

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —because he knows better than that. The Member knows better than that.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Member knows better than that.

But the point that I am making is that this particular avenue being closed to folks who recently ran

will show the community that it is through merit that they are appointed. And if somebody wants to—

Hon. E. David Burt: Merit how?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, I am just—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, if we are going to . . . if we are going to sit in this Chamber and pretend that the public opinion is not at an all-time low when it comes to the political class in this country, then I can tell you that either somebody is delusional—

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —or they are just simply refusing to accept what they are hearing, because it does not take much door-knocking to hear it.

And it is not a personal thing. It is not somebody saying, *Oh, I can't stand this particular Honourable Member*. It's politicians—and it's a global trend. And I know that sometimes some folks obviously have trouble with the global trend, but it is a global trend.

You see people getting elected overseas because they are [quote/unquote] "political outsiders." That is how people are running because people are looking at politicians as the establishment. Period. It doesn't matter what stripe you are.

And if we can't unite in this House around reality, then we have a problem, because that is reality.

How many times has a Minister stood up here and said, *It's a thankless job*. You know, *I get the calls and nobody . . .* that's what you hear in this House. Nobody stands up and says, *Hey, stop. Stop moping*.

That is the reality. It is a thankless job.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: I am quite fulfilled.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, well, I am glad you are fulfilled. But there are a lot of colleagues who have stood up here and said opposite.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And I am not saying that it is not appreciated. But at the end of the day, every politician is held to that standard, whether . . . like, people are not looking as much [at] separation when it comes to party, when it comes to being a member of politics. That is just how folks are looking.

And as we have seen in the trends with the majority vote, people are voting person, more so now. And so, these are the trends that are happening. And that is not . . . that is not because people are not qualified. I never would . . . I never would stand up in this House

and accuse any one of my colleagues of being unqualified to hold their position.

But the point that we are making is that we are looking to improve public opinion for all of us. We are looking to listen to the way folks are responding to us on the doorstep and show them that, hey, yes, you can be appointed as a Senator. Yes, you can be under our system unelected, be appointed, become a Minister.

But in this situation where somebody is serving at the private pleasure of a person who is their party Leader or Premier or whatnot, it also applies to the Opposition, and the Opposition Leader. And I think that that is something that can't get lost here.

And so, I respect, I understand from the other side where they are coming from. And I will never look to diminish the . . . the . . . experiences of any of my colleagues in this House.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, with that, I think we should try to come together on the fact that, yes, we want to encourage people to join the political system and get involved. But we also want to make sure the public doesn't question us and our reasons for getting involved when they see certain appointments. And we know which ones people have picked up on. And I am not going to go into anybody or anything personal.

It has happened on both sides, which is why it is good that this applies to both sides, because at the end of the day we cannot discriminate against any Member of this House. When we come in here, we are all representatives of our constituencies. It is not . . . I don't refer to someone as the PLP MP for [constituency] 29. You know, when the Speaker calls the name, he says representative for [constituency] 29. You know, that is how I think we should approach this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Adams.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member who just took his seat. But I can also say that in politics, at every door that I knock on there is a different person with a different concern, with a different perspective, a different view. And the point I am saying is that, earlier, the Member was referring to us not being able to grasp reality on how . . . what people are saying.

But Mr. Speaker, I could also say on countless times I walk the streets, and there are people who tell me and my colleagues, *Great job, you all. And thank you.*

So, this narrative of doom and gloom, like everyone is unhappy, and everyone is miserable, and everyone is struggling, that is not the case. And we cannot accept this narrative that is continuously being pushed.

But I will then get specific to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, at first glance, this Bill appears straightforward. I believe with this Bill, the Opposition is ultimately (as they say) looking to increase public confidence. A word that they have said countless times is "trust."

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: And one of the ways they propose to do so with this Bill is by preventing individuals who lose an election from being appointed to these positions for two years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying . . . it goes without saying that public confidence and integrity and transparency are all important. And I genuinely believe that every Member of this Honourable House is in agreement with that. However, Mr. Speaker, good intentions alone do not make for good pieces of legislation. You see, the question I asked myself, and the question that I believe we should all ask ourselves as legislators is whether this Bill actually improves governance.

Now, I have reviewed the Bill several times, and I do not believe it does. And, therefore, like my colleagues have said, I cannot support this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my first issue, similar to what the Premier had mentioned earlier, is the fact that it creates a new legal restriction on someone based solely on the fact that they have put their name forward during an election.

My second issue is that it responds—

An Hon. Member: Lost.

Hon. Jache Adams: Lost an election.

And my second issue is that it responds to perception. And this is the key one. It responds to perception rather than demonstrated misconduct.

And my final issue with this, and this is my opinion, is that it actually does not solve the very problem it claims to address. And I will get into this.

So now, first, when Parliament creates a new legal restriction, we should ask ourselves, *What conduct justifies that disqualification or restriction?* In other words, what has the person done that warrants Parliament taking away an opportunity that would otherwise be available to them?

Notice, this Bill is not looking to place restrictions on a person because of any form of misconduct [or] conflict of interest. It isn't even proposing to place restrictions on a person because of incompetence. What the One Bermuda Alliance is proposing with this Bill is to place restrictions on a Bermudian who simply exercised their democratic right to stand for an election and subsequently was unsuccessful.

Mr. Speaker, we really need to sit on that for a second and grasp how egregious that is. Every election we champion democracy and encourage people to put themselves forward. We tell them that democracy

depends upon citizens being willing to step up. And now the OBA is proposing, with this Bill, to begin the slippery slope (and these are my words, “the slippery slope”) of placing restrictions on individuals who do. It tells them that if they answer the call and therefore are unsuccessful, Parliament will impose a legal restriction that would never have applied had they simply stayed home. This is what we are talking about today, Mr. Speaker, with this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly do not believe that this is the message that Parliament should be sending.

But what I find even more difficult to understand is the inconsistency at the heart of this Bill. Mr. Speaker, the emphasis under this Bill is on an unsuccessful candidate but has nothing to say about a successful one. So, what we have here is either another poorly thought-out Bill by the One Bermuda Alliance, or they are actually saying that they have no issue if a successful candidate was hired under this Bill. But if you are unsuccessful, you must wait two years.

An Hon. Member: Well, move your amendments then. Move your amendments.

Hon. Jache Adams: Come on.

In fact, I am very surprised, and I will say this, I am very surprised that MP Pearman . . . because I find him to be a stickler for details.

And so again, for us to be here debating this Bill leads me to believe that it is deliberate.

Hon. E. David Burt: Everything about political motive.

Hon. Jache Adams: This is deliberate.

Hon. E. David Burt: Political motive—

Hon. Jache Adams: So, I ask a very simple question.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let's go.

Hon. Jache Adams: What is it about losing an election that suddenly makes someone unsuitable? Does losing an election make a lawyer less qualified? Does losing an election make an engineer less capable? Does losing an election make an economist less knowledgeable?

An Hon. Member: No!

Hon. Jache Adams: Of course not.

And I will remind the Opposition that many of them at this very moment have been unsuccessful candidates at some point.

An Hon. Member: It could be a cushy job.

Hon. Jache Adams: That is why—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: —that is why the very thought . . . that is why the very thought of placing restrictions on a person, purely based on the fact of them being unsuccessful at the polls, cannot stand.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: I don't know . . . colleagues earlier have mentioned this.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Colleagues earlier have mentioned this. And I don't know how true this is. It has not happened to me. But I have certainly heard the stories, Mr. Speaker, of how persons claim, and again I say claim because I wasn't there, I don't know, but they claim that they were threatened by members of the former UBP, that they would lose their jobs or their mortgage if they don't vote for them.

And it is alarming, and this is what I will say,—

An Hon. Member: Twenty years ago?

Hon. Jache Adams: —it is alarming that decades later the OBA is here bringing this Bill and I will leave it at that.

An Hon. Member: Thirty years ago?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, my second concern is that this legislation is built upon perception rather than demonstrated and substantiated misconduct.

Now let me say this, because the MP DeCouto says *perception*. Well, in the explanatory notes, in the explanatory statement, it tells us that the Bill seeks to address the perception that unsuccessful candidates may be rewarded through appointments.

An Hon. Member: Perception.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, now perception has its place, can't deny it. But Parliament should be very cautious about creating legal restrictions based upon perception alone. Notice, I have yet to hear of a single example of an appointee in their duties engaged in any misconduct.

However, the One Bermuda Alliance believes there should be legal restrictions on individuals, not because they actually did anything wrong, but just because it is perceived that they could.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: It is about perception. Read the Bill, perception is what this addresses.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, legislation should be built upon evidence—read the Bill—not simply on perception.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, when I break it down, I do not believe this Bill actually solves the problem it is trying and claiming to solve. It appears the Opposition is saying that unsuccessful candidates should not be rewarded with government positions. Yet even if this Bill were to pass, unsuccessful candidates will still be allowed to be appointed elsewhere in government.

So, let us ask the obvious question. If an unsuccessful candidate can still be appointed to the Senate, if an unsuccessful candidate can still be appointed to a government board, if an unsuccessful candidate can still contribute their expertise to government, then what exactly is this Bill looking to achieve?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah! Good question.
He will take a point of order.

Hon. Jache Adams: See, Mr. Speaker, good legislation actually solves problems. It should improve governance. It should produce better outcomes. And this Bill simply does not.

And so, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I just cannot support it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Honourable Minister.

Minister De Silva, would you like to add your comments?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am going to try to be a little short.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: You are short!

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You remember once upon a time, I had to stand on a box when Stanley Lowe was our Speaker. We used to have that joke every Friday.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised at this particular Bill is being presented in this House by this particular MP.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I was quite surprised that this particular MP brought this Bill, because I would have expected it to have been brought by—

An Hon. Member: Someone else.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —someone else. Not this particular individual. It just doesn't seem right to me, because this Bill has nothing but a large wedge attached to it. And when I say that, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about trying to wedge the relationship of our community.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And we get a laugh from Honourable Member DeCouto.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, it's funny that he should laugh, because that Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, talked about this Bill stopping friends and family relationships, talked about this Bill—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Deputy [Premier] is, I know, unintentionally misleading the House. I said that many people look at this and say it looks like friends and family, which is a different thing.

The Speaker: Okay, you made reference to it; he is making reference to the same statement.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He also made reference several times to these *little cushy jobs*.

An Hon. Member: Yes. I heard him.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it is high time . . . that Honourable Member has been in this House now for a while. And every week he has to be pulled up because of the things he infers. And tonight was no different.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me refer back to the Opposition's Reply to the Budget this year. And on page 37, the Honourable Shadow Minister, and I will quote with your leave, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: “So while the Premier makes numerous visits to the Middle East and Crypto conferences to” (in brackets, inverted commas) “‘make connections’ . . .” What do you think that means? *Make connections*. And quite frankly, it should have been struck from the record because we know . . . I will take a point of order if he wants to explain to me what “make connections” in inverted brackets means. Because I know what it infers. It is just like the *friends and family*.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it's just like the *little cushy jobs*.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's a . . . it's a . . . we are seeing a trend.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The language “make connections,” it's the sort of language that comes directly from the Premier's statements, describing these trips. They are marketing trips. They go to make connections with trade, trade associations. And the reason I put it in quotes is because, frankly, it's only connections and we are not seeing tangible benefits here in Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member, he tried—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He tried to give an explanation.

The Speaker: He gave an explanation for—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And I guess what?

The Speaker: —his use of it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I appreciate that. But I think most people in this House and most people in the country know exactly what he was meaning by putting that in inverted brackets, Mr. Speaker. Just like he said, *friends and family*, just like he said, *little cushy jobs*. He meant cushy little jobs. He couldn't even say cushy jobs. He had to [be] more demeaning by saying *little* cushy jobs.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In other words, getting paid for doing nothing. That is what he's inferring.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Deputy [Premier] is definitely imputing improper motive because I did not mean to demean. I was relaying.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am relaying—

The Speaker: Wait, Members. Wait, Members. Come on. Come on.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am relaying public perception, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, he said that several times tonight, relaying public . . . what did he say?

Several Hon. Members: Perceptions.

The Speaker: Perceptions.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Perceptions.

Well, let's look where he goes in the public.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Royal Yacht Club, Fairylands, Tucker's Town.

Hon. E. David Burt: Of course!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's where he goes, Mr. Speaker.

So, when he refers to public perception

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —he ain't going around Devonshire, right?

The Speaker: Point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The speaker, the Deputy [Premier] is not even correct.

Thank you.

The Speaker: You should let him hang out with you, so you can figure out where he goes. How's that?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: How's that?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Oh, champagne brunch at Tucker's Point.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: If the Honourable Member DeCouto was to hang out with me, he would not hear the things that he hears around Fairylands and around the Yacht Club. I can assure you that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, we had a bit of history told here tonight, and sometimes it's important for us to talk about history. And when you talk about when people represent the Progressive Labour Party, and I heard my young brother, my young Honourable Member brother over there talking about his experiences being an OBA member. I will tell you what . . . he might have had, and you might have some experiences, bad experiences being an OBA member, but come over this side.

Then you will what experience is like being belonging to a political party in this country. And I say ask people like Andrew Outerbridge, Dr. Barbara Ball.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, myself. History will show what I have had to go through. And I'm not looking for any sympathy, but it is a fact.

And I'm light. And you will know, Mr. Speaker (you have been here longer than all of us), what it is like for anyone who wears green and white, what they have to go through in their life and what their children and family have to go through, too. Let's not forget them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give you one example that . . . because I know there are a lot of new Members next door. They might remember a former Member of the OBA by the name of Jeff Baron, former Honourable Member. He resigned one night, Mr. Speaker, and the next week, guess where he went? He was National Security Minister. Guess where he got a job? Now I am not talking about a little cushy job. I am talking about a really nice job at HSBC. Head of what? Security.

You had another former Member. His name was Scott. Wayne Scott. Resigned as a Minister. Where did he go work next?

An Hon. Member: The Gaming Commission.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Gaming Commission. Making twice as much as what a Minister made. But see, all these things are okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: When we talk . . . well, it might have been a little bit less than that. I agree.

But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is trying to penalise people. *Penalise*. That is what it is. It is to penalise and it is to say to any future young men or young women who wish to run in politics for either side. Because you haven't left out yourselves. You might get in another 50 years. So, you guys might experience it.

But what it's doing is attempting to penalise—financial terrorism, some people might call it—penalise people for wanting to represent their country, who might actually care for the people of this country [who] might want to be a part of the process of decisions that are made on behalf of the people in this country. They might genuinely want to do that. So, they are going to be penalised.

And how many times do we say we don't have enough intelligence in people who are running for political office? Well, actually, we do have a lot of intelligent people on both sides who want to run for political office. Why should they be penalised if they're not successful and we want that brain power in the Premier's office or in a Minister's office?

What, you want [is for] us to hire people who we don't know and we don't trust and they don't know our political agenda—

An Hon. Member: Give political advice.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —to give political advice?

So, Mr. Speaker, that is what we . . . that is why we will never support this Bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment at this point?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Speaker: None?

Would the mover of the motion, mover of the Bill—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank every Member who contributed to this debate. Because it's—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if I may, on behalf of Members, move on a matter of personal privilege and ask your indulgence.

It seems that the air conditioner is not working. Can we remove our jackets?

The Speaker: Yes, please. Go right ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Keep your shirt on, though.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the previous speakers for contributing to this debate.

I think it is a crucial part of our political discourse that we define where our beliefs fall. Because if we are unable to see the differences between each other's political views, especially as it relates to intent, underlying philosophy, belief systems, then we are unable to proceed on matters that are very significant. And on this one, we have a great benchmark—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: —in that it is a narrow Bill.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: It does not attempt to do a great many things, but rather a relatively restricted or limited thing, so as to address a matter of public confidence.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And everyone who spoke this evening spoke to a variety of points, not just about the Bill, but it expanded. One of the most important expansions of this debate, Mr. Speaker, was on the lived experience and the historical scars that are both significant and deep.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible, I think, in a modern country to deny, to alter, or to explain away the horrors of our past. It is not fitting for this Honourable House to try to diminish or in any other way excuse our past. It is as horrible to me as it is to anybody.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And so, it is crucial that when we speak about Bills, that when it comes up it is acknowledged and put on the table. And I am thankful for everyone putting it on the table.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some commentary and opinions on this Bill, including that it is sinister,

that it is discriminatory, and that since it is known it would not pass, then it clearly has some other intent.

Let me speak to all of these criticisms, Mr. Speaker, because I think they should be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill was developed and tabled pursuant to the Constitution of our country. It was constrained by all precedent. It was developed in a manner that it could be tabled for the purposes of this debate. It was further limited and shaped by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, Opposition Bills come that way. Opposition Bills are enshrined, not only in Constitution, but in Standing Orders. And this prescribed a very specific methodology for how to do it. That methodology was adhered to loyally and faithfully. There is no defect in process. There is no weaponisation of intent. This is a clear, constitutionally aligned process, one that I have loved participating in, even though the Opposition typically participates only in the scrutinising of Government legislation. Like I said, the Constitution and Standing Orders provide for the Opposition to legislate. And so, we have legislated, Mr. Speaker.

But we legislate on different terms than the Government, Mr. Speaker. The Government has access to institutional resources far exceeding that of the Opposition. We make do with our annual budget of \$70,000. The Government makes do with its budget of \$1.2 billion.

And as such, Mr. Speaker, it provides them incredible opportunities as it relates to the legislative process. Opportunities that I think, Mr. Speaker, would be better applied if they were to attend to an Opposition Bill and address all of those full resources into the Committee. Because, Mr. Speaker, our Constitution and the Standing Orders of this House outline that the Committee is where we exchange ideas. This part, Mr. Speaker, is about principles. Are the principles correct? And if the principles are sound, we move them into the Committee. But there we workshop. There we exchange ideas. There we include. There we amend, Mr. Speaker.

You see, Mr. Speaker, one of the deficits, I think, of our current parliamentary processes is that when Bills arrive in the House there seems to be this presumption that they will float straight through. Not that they will face the rough toing and froing of a modern Westminster parliamentary democracy. Not that they won't be assigned in Committee, that Whips won't have to meet to decide who's doing what when something is happening, what actual documents are being circulated, Mr. Speaker.

It is one of our deficiencies. It is one that I always regret, but it is one that I think the public should know that our Committee process, as enshrined in the Constitution, is a rich environment for problem-solving in Bermuda.

And this is one of the areas, Mr. Speaker, where we could always problem solve. You see, Mr. Speaker, everything we can do better. Mr. Speaker, we

are capable of coming up into this House and resolving the most difficult issues of our country, not in a manner that degrades one another, but in a manner that aligns with the ultimate goals for our country.

Mr. Speaker, public confidence is worthwhile to listen to. You see, Mr. Speaker, I think one of our biggest problems with politics globally is that we seem to think, or the public seems to think, that it is built like marble or granite, that it is strong, that it can just withstand time, that it doesn't require participation. And the fact is that our democratic systems are incredibly fragile. They are incredibly fragile, Mr. Speaker. And that is why public confidence is so, so key.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Public confidence means that people who trust us can trust us to make a hard decision, Mr. Speaker. This decision isn't particularly hard, but one day there will be hard decisions brought, and there was an attempt.

But, Mr. Speaker, the nature of the Opposition Bill is to preserve and enhance the trust, the trust the public have in this Honourable House, the trust they have in us as Members.

Mr. Speaker, it is key that we work together on the things that we can work together on. And though they are rare, they seemingly are rare, we should nonetheless aspire and find them.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot condemn a Member who stands up and gives a reasoned argument to say I can't vote for something. That is their right. That is their privilege. And I concur with every single . . . and I would defend their right to do so. I would not think them mean, I would not think them of ill intent. But, Mr. Speaker, I do think that to start a contribution with *I am not going to vote no matter what for this*, is a strange starting position in a place where we are sent to work together to accomplish the one outcome that Bermuda desires.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has made clear that it is not open to consider the Bill. It is not open to making amendments. It is not open for us to rise and report [progress] for further consideration. It has said that the entire process will not be allowed to proceed. And that is their right, Mr. Speaker, they have the votes for it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the difference between this Bill, its intent, and the Government's position on it helps to explain the situation Bermuda finds herself in.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a point. He said: *What is the problem he is trying to solve?* And then he proceeded to say, it is not the solution for the problem that he couldn't figure out. Which was curious.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I would point out that the Premier's lack of awareness of the problem is why this problem exists.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I invite the Government to vote to confirm the suspicions which generated this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we stand every night here doing the people's work. And at the conclusion of this, the Opposition will have its say, and the Government will have its way. But one thing I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, is this attitude I heard the other day, which was repeated in this House, *Why are you tabling legislation? You knew it wouldn't pass.*

An Hon. Member: Uh-huh.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the roles and privileges of the Opposition are enshrined in law. And we will do our job pursuant to our mandate and the laws of this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I haven't put the motion yet.

The Member has now called for the Bill to be committed.

Are we all in favour of being committed?

Several Hon. Members: No.

Other Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: It sounds like the noes outweighed the ayes.

Would anyone want to take a name call? I don't think so. I don't think so.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Anyone wants a name call?

Some Hon. Members: Names.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, Lord. They stood up.

The Speaker: Three members have stood up, which means we will now have to go to names.

Hon. E. David Burt: Ring a bell.

The Speaker: Sarge, [do] you want to make sure everyone's in? We have got . . . what have we got, two minutes before they all can get in?

Let me set you—

An Hon. Member: Five.

The Speaker: Five minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You want to wait five minutes? All right.

The Deputy Clerk: It is two minutes.

The Speaker: The Clock's on.

The Deputy Clerk: It's two minutes.

The Speaker: It is two minutes. It is two minutes . . . it is two minutes. Five is too long. Two minutes. Two minutes.

Any Member in the sound of this, who is in the building, wants to come down into the Chamber. You got two minutes to . . . well, a minute . . . a minute and a half to be here.

An Hon. Member: A minute and a half.

[Pause for the ringing of the bell]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The clock is ticking.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: For the listening audience, a division has been called, which means we have to get Members who weren't in the Chamber in if they wish to participate in this vote. And there is a two-minute time period before we can call the names for the vote.

And we are just now waiting for those two minutes to expire. There are about 16 seconds left, and then we will start the name call for the vote. That's for the listening audience who are still up at 12:30 am listening.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remind the time.

The Speaker: I just want to keep them informed.

Hon. E. David Burt: It's 12:30.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Members, the two-minute time has expired. No more Members can enter.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no! Too bad.

The Speaker: Members cannot enter, and we will now take the name call.

Mrs. Beale, would you like to start the roll call?
The Deputy Clerk. Mrs. Beale will now do the roll call.

The Deputy Clerk: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be committed.

If you are in agreement with the Bill being committed, say Aye. If you are against, say Nay.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

DIVISION

[Motion that the Bill entitled Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be committed]

Ayes: 9

Hon. L. C. Cannonier
Dr. D. DeCouto
Mr. R. King
Mr. S. Pearman
Mr. J. Richardson
Mr. D. Robinson
Hon. B. Smith
Ms. L. Smith
Ms. R. Tucker

Nays: 16

Hon. J. Adams
Hon. E. D. Burt
Hon. O. Darrell
Hon. Z. J. S. De Silva
Hon. Rev. Dr. E. A. Dill
Mr. C. Famous
Ms. L. F. Foggo
Hon. T. Furbert
Hon. J. Hayward
Hon. A. Lightbourne
Mr. D. Lister III
Mrs. R. Ming
Hon. D. V. S. Rabain
Mr. H. E. Swan
Mr. M. A. Weeks
Hon. K. N. Wilson

Absent: 10

Pastor L. Bean
Mr. V. Campbell
Mr. C. L. Dickinson
Hon. M. Fahy
Hon. W. L. Furbert
Mr. W. L. Scott
Mr. J. S. Simmons
Mr. S. Simmons
Mr. N. S. Tyrrell
Mr. P. Wilmot

The Deputy Clerk: With a vote of 9 Ayes to 16 Nays, the motion is defeated.

[Motion defeated by majority on division: The Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 was not committed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members, for your participation.

The next item on the Order Paper . . . is that being done or carried over? The second reading for the

Road Traffic and Motor Car (Road Safety and Penalties) Act [2026]. Is that being carried?

An Hon. Member: Carried.

The Speaker: Okay, it is being carried.

Okay, that brings us to the end of the business for today. We are going to do the third readings, and then I will make an announcement.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

BILL

THIRD READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: The second item—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The Human Rights . . . Oh?

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I do mine?

The Speaker: Oh, you would like to do yours, while on your feet. Do [Order] No. 3 and [Order] No. 5.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just [Order No.] 3.

The Speaker: No, just . . . [Order No.] 5 is Supplementary. Do [Order] No. 3.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Corporate . . . sorry, the Tax Credits Amendment Act [2026] be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None. Proceed.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the said Bill be read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Would the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors like to do [Order] No. 2?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed. Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Health, you can do both of yours.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order [21] be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled . . .

The Speaker: The Bermuda Health Council—

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended . . . oh dear . . . and that the Bill be read now, it's third time . . . sorry, read for the third time [by] its title only.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: [Order] No. 6, the Minister of Home Affairs.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026.

The Speaker: Any objections?

Several Hon. Members: Yes!

An Hon. Member: Objections.

The Speaker: Objections to it being read the third time by title only, and so it doesn't sound like there are any names being called, and I don't know if the objections were outweighed by those in favour.
Those in favour?

Many Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Those objecting?

Several Hon. Members: No.

The Speaker: The ayes have it.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Minister.

BILL

THIRD READING

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Cost of Living Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: [Order] No. 7, Junior Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?
None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: That takes care of all the third readings for tonight.

Before I call on the Premier to take us to the motion to adjourn, I will read a ruling in reference to a matter that rose last week.

SPEAKER'S RULING

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSSES IN BERMUDA AND THE SUB JUDICE STATUS OF CERTAIN MATTERS BEFORE THE COURTS IN BERMUDA

The Speaker: The subject is the ruling regarding the debate on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Historical Land Losses in Bermuda and the sub judice status of certain matters now before the courts in Bermuda.

Honourable Members, a question has been raised regarding whether this House is procedurally barred from debating the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Historical Land Losses in Bermuda due to the sub judice rule, specifically Standing Order 19(11)(b), in light of the ongoing litigations in the Supreme Court. I have reviewed the status of the matters brought to the Court's attention regarding Civil Jurisdiction 2024: No. 285, the plaintiffs have filed an appeal against the Supreme Court's decision to strike out their writ.

While this matter is once again before the courts, I maintain my ruling that this House is not procedurally barred from debating the Commission of Inquiry Report. The subject of this House debate, which is the policy findings and recommendations contained in the Report, is distinct from the specific legal merits of the appeal.

The Judiciary will resolve the civil dispute. This House will address the public interest issues raised by the Commission.

Regarding Civil Jurisdiction 2025: No. 114, I note that the plaintiffs have included a request in their originating summons for the Court to ask this House to pause any debate on the Commission of Inquiry Report.

The Speaker must be guided by the following principles.

1. The sub judice threshold. Standing Order 19(11)(b) prohibits debate that might, in the opinion of the Speaker, prejudice the interest of parties to a legal proceeding. This Rule is intended to protect the administration of justice, ensuring that a jury or a judge is not unduly influenced by public debate on the factual findings of a specific ongoing trial.
2. The nature of litigation. Case No: 114 is a constitutional challenge concerning the process and statutory framework of the Commission of Inquiry in reference to whether the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1935 portends an inadequate right of appeal under article 6(8) of the Constitution. This is a question of law and statutory structure. A political debate regarding the findings of the Commission's Report is distinct from and unlikely to [prejudice] the judge's legal interpretation of the Bermuda Constitution.
3. Separation of powers. The mere filing of a summons in the Supreme Court which requests that this House stay its hand does not constitute a binding judicial injunction. This House is the supreme legislative body, and its constitutional duty to deliberate on matters of significant public interest cannot be automatically

suspended by the filing of a private litigation. To rule otherwise would be to surrender the House's legislative autonomy to any litigant who chooses to file such a motion.

Accordingly, I rule that this House is not procedurally barred from debating the Report.

However, in the interest of maintaining the highest standards of our proceedings and respecting the ongoing judicial review, I provide the following guidance to all Members.

1. Avoid sub judice issues: Members should exercise caution and avoid commenting on any specific merits of the constitutional questions currently before the Court, namely, the legal validity of the Commission's refusal to hear Case No. 51 or to the specific interpretation of article 6(8) of the Constitution.
2. Focus on policy: Our debate should remain focused on the policy implications of the Report, the broader issues of the historical land loss and the Commission's finding as a matter of public record.
3. The restriction on questions: Members are further reminded of Standing Order 17(5)(g)(iv) which explicitly prohibits the asking of any questions that reflect on the decisions of a court of law or likely to prejudice a matter under trial.

This serves as a vital procedural companion to the restriction on debate, ensuring that neither formal inquiries nor oral deliberations inadvertently interfere with the judicial proceedings.

This House may proceed with the motion.

That's my ruling, and the matter can be taken up at any time in the future.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Would you like to do it now, Members? We have still got hours on the clock.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: With that, I am going to call on the Premier to move the motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

With communication having been shared with the Opposition Leader, yourself and others, Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, September 4.

And noting that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to the motion to adjourn, if there are no other Members that wish to speak.

The Speaker: Any other Member wish . . . no, the Premier is on his feet—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I will be extremely, what they call that, vertically challenged right now.

An Hon. Member: Short.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, that's the word, short.

[Laughter]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't make it earlier, wasn't feeling well, so I missed the condolences. I want to give condolences to some families in Devonshire, if possible.

Mrs. Francis—

The Speaker: On the motion to adjourn, you can—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, well, I don't want to be sub judice, right?

The Speaker: I'll tell you what, you can do it under the three-minute requirement of condolences in the morning, and not the 20 minutes of the motion to adjourn.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good one, good one—

The Speaker: I can set the clock for three minutes if you'd like.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Frances Baker of Green Acres in Devonshire, she passed a couple weeks ago. Mrs. Baker was a stalwart of Devonshire, Christ Church Devonshire, Wolves Sports Club, whatever to do with Devonshire, she was it. She was one of those big mamas.

An Hon. Member: Ariel Sands.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Ariel Sands, as well.

Additionally, her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Joan Pike-Daniels, passed away. Also, a big mama of Green Acres. So, I want to—

Mr. Robert King: Associate.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —speak to the family—Associate MP King.

I want to speak to their families to say how much I love them, how much the family is loved. Because they are going through changes now that they haven't . . . obviously they have to adjust to.

Also, Mr. "Honky" Simons, I don't mean that in a discriminatory way. Before anyone says anything, right? He was also from Devonshire, a Loyal Hill Incubator, as they say, Inky.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Incubator.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Incubator, passed suddenly. Not of Devonshire, I guess you would say a young stalwart of Devonshire.

CUP MATCH, TRUE MEANING OF

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, as I close down, I just want to say the true meaning of Cup Match is never about who wins Cup Match. It is about the fact that our people fought for their emancipation. And lodges from both ends of the Island started a function to celebrate that. So, I want all of our Members, no matter which side you are on, or the confused people who say that they are neutral—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I don't know, I didn't hear it, but there are some out there. To understand—

The Speaker: There's no neutrality in Bermuda.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I have tried to explain that, but some people say that their mama is St. George's, their daddy is Somerset, so they want to make sure that they don't get disinherited, so they just walk down the middle.

The Speaker: No. Don't work.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, my point is this, is that we celebrate Emancipation one day, Mary Prince the other day. It was in your very House eight years ago that we started the process to decolonise Emancipation Weekend. So, I want to thank those who support it, thank those who realise that we must not, can't conflate emancipation with a coloniser.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and happy Sabbath. Have a good weekend, and I will see you up in Somerset when we take the Cup down east.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, that won't happen.

Any other Member . . . MP Lister. You want to join in this one too, MP Lister?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, the hour is late, so I will try—

The Speaker: Yes, it is.

CUP MATCH SAFETY

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —not to speak too long.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do just want to follow in the vein of the memory for me. In two weeks, we will not be in this House, and we will be celebrating Cup Match, Mr. Speaker. Whether you are blue and blue or red and blue, as you said, there is no side.

Mr. Speaker, Cup Match showcases the best of Bermuda. Even though we have different teams that we support, we all come together, whether it is at Somerset this year or in the odd year up in St. George's. And we can celebrate, we can have fun, win, lose, or draw. Bermudians, we can still find the good . . . enjoy it, whether it's a win, lose, or draw.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wish everyone a safe weekend, and as we go into Cup Match, a safe holiday, Mr. Speaker. I know last time we spoke we spoke a lot about our roads. And I just want to again implore and encourage people, as we celebrate over the next two weeks, to be mindful. Do not drink, consume alcohol, or any other substances, and then get on a bike or a car, and try to get to point A to B. We want to keep our roads safe.

Mr. Speaker, my main points I want to speak about tonight, and I know it's late, so I'm going to try and keep it . . . Mr. Speaker. That was the preamble.

[Laughter]

CORPORATE INCOME TAX ACT RIPPLE EFFECTS

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we did have two debates, two Bills presented by the Minister of Finance on the corporate income tax. But I don't want to speak on that, Mr. Speaker. What I want to speak on is the impact of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, we had the Budget Debate, and it was quoted today by the Member from the Opposition, where I did [speak to] ripple effects of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, just as when you throw a pebble or a stone into the water, those—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, that was me.

As you throw a stone in the water, those ripples go on until they reach another shore or wherever, Mr. Speaker. Months later, I can still report on a ripple effect of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today in our debates, there was much made in regard to the regulatory framework of

Bermuda, how we have a strong regulatory framework, whether it's the BMA, the RA. In this case, it's the CITA, Mr. Speaker. And I say that because, Mr. Speaker, I want to reference, if possible two articles in *The Royal Gazette*, Mr. Speaker, one more recent than the other.

Back in April, April 23, in [The Royal Gazette](#), Mr. Speaker, there was an article put out titled *Tax regime attracting cruise lines to Bermuda*. And quoting one of the directors of Conyers', Mr. Speaker, which he put, he stated: "The legislative framework," of Bermuda "allows corporations to qualify for an exclusion from corporate tax on international shipping income, provided they can demonstrate that the strategic management and decision-making regarding their vessels take place . . . In addition to the CIT Act, Bermuda is widely recognised as a first-class jurisdiction to do business, known for its stable English common law system, close proximity to the US and Europe and its robust regulatory environment and modern infrastructure."

So, Mr. Speaker, we see how even in the shipping and the cruise industry, our framework is attracting businesses' cruise lines to Bermuda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to refer to another [The Royal Gazette](#) article, more recent, an article from July 8, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the title, *Beyond tax: why big companies are choosing Bermuda*. And I want to quote again, one of the articles of Conyers again.

And it is quoted, Mr. Speaker. Leading public . . . I am sorry, I have to find where I had that, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Mr. Speaker, it talks about how these multinational companies are choosing Bermuda or leaving other jurisdictions to come to Bermuda because of our regulatory framework and the strong framework we have, Mr. Speaker.

And so, again, these are the ripple effects of the CIT, Mr. Speaker, where we are seeing businesses, multinational entities, selecting Bermuda as a jurisdiction to do their business in. And so, again, it goes to show and prove what we have done. The Government, in conjunction with the other regulatory bodies, to show that we have a strong and stable framework in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

And as I said, I don't want to talk too long, the hour is late, Mr. Speaker. But I just wanted to raise that—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —because . . . to show the work that is being done.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

CUP MATCH

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And I want to go further in, and again, the spirit of Cup Match, Mr. Speaker, is that everyone in Bermuda plays a part in the environment here. Whether if you work in the industries—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —whether you are in the hotel industry, whatever industry, Mr. Speaker, we all play our part to help make Bermuda a successful jurisdiction for business to be done here.

So, I just want to say thank you, Mr. Speaker, to those who work in the regulatory industries. People that, us as politicians that set policies and legislation. But also, to the everyday Bermudians who help, as I said, whether you work in hospitality, whatever other industry, we all work to help make this economy work. And a byproduct of that is seeing these multinational companies choose and select Bermuda as a jurisdiction to do business in.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again, as we head into Cup Match, just want everyone to be mindful to be safe, enjoy it, enjoy it responsibly. And I look to see all our Members in this House on September 4, Mr. Speaker, where we can continue doing the work of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Lister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA, OBA RESPONSE

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, although I would like to give my traditional remarks before we go into the Cup Match break, I think it's also important for me to answer to a very, very, very long Statement that was made by the Premier earlier today. Because the Premier thought that he would take the opportunity to give everybody—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The good news.

Hon. Ben Smith: —his version of the last nine years. I guess he felt that it was important that the population could have a view of what he was able to accomplish over that period of time.

Hon. E. David Burt: We do it every year —

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, the issue is that the Premier told us that his Government built this fairer Bermuda . . . and that his record speaks for itself.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with him. His record does speak for itself.

But I am not sure his record says what he thinks it says. Because, Mr. Speaker, although you can say certain things, like when he mentioned the scholarships and the signature schools and the spending that

was done on education, we in the Opposition support the scholarships. We support that progress.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now you do.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: But the difference is, Mr. Speaker, you can't stand and make that comment without pointing out the fact what our literacy numbers are, what our numeracy numbers are, and what the actual issues are. Where the teachers are not feeling supported, where the parents are losing confidence in the education system.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: Both of those things are happening at the same time under that leadership over nine years.

Mr. Speaker, he can talk about the progress that he had in health care, while grandmothers are right now in hallways in that hospital. Both parts of that picture need to be painted, not a one-sided one.

And yes, increases in pension year after year after year.

An Hon. Member: Yes, well done.

Hon. Ben Smith: Well done by the Government. That's what the Premier wants us to do on this side, applaud that, and we do.

But Mr. Speaker, the people in the country also are saying that whatever those benefits are, they are not enough for them to pay for the groceries as we talked about earlier today, the BELCO bill, the medical bills, because every year they are falling further behind in this country. And as we have corporate income tax with millions of dollars, and as we see record growth in international business, the local economy is stagnant or falling behind.

And they can argue against it. The problem is that at the same time, we have emigration numbers that have continued to grow. Emigration numbers that are continuing to grow. Because, Mr. Speaker,—

An Hon. Member: Where's the data?

Hon. Ben Smith: *Where's the data?* There it is.

An Hon. Member: Where is it?

Hon. Ben Smith: Because one thing about them, they can get up and give all of these Statements about how wonderful everything is.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: But when they actually are looking at the unemployment numbers dropping, they are not

counting the fact that a lot of that unemployment has been exported to other countries.

That's the reality of our people. Because as we stand here, understanding that some of our people are figuring out whether they can continue to live in the house that the generation before them built, they are having to decide that they are going to sell out. And the majority of those sales are from Black Bermudians. And the majority of those purchases are from foreigners. Under the Government that wants us to celebrate everything that they have done. That means you have to tell the whole story, not just the part that you want people to hear.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: They don't want us to talk about propaganda.

But Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the housing that is being built in the country, or about to be built, we have to talk about the people who tonight have nowhere to live. And that has been day after day after day. That number has continued to grow. The homeless number has grown faster than the international business number on the other side. Because, Mr. Speaker, the more you build the safety net, the more the middle class has been caught in that net. You have to grow the economy.

We have a crisis [in] our population. An ageing population, low birth rate, more and more people moving to the retirement age. And as we have heard over and over again those people, our people, our seniors who built this country, more of them are finding themselves where? On Financial Assistance. Because they can't survive in the country that they helped to build. You've had 30 years to create the progress. How many more days are you going to blame the four years of the One Bermuda Alliance? And you've had nine years, that you talked about today all the wonderful things you've done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: And one more time. Over and over again. The population is getting tired of those excuses and us talking about all these things that we did 10 years ago, 8 years ago, 5 years ago. They want to know what we're going to do right now to help them.

Mr. Speaker, as we are preparing for this national holiday that we all want to celebrate, that cost of living which keeps growing is strangling our population. They're going to go into those grocery stores and want to celebrate and not be able to afford all the things that they used to be able to afford. And that's the reality of more and more of our population. And while that is happening, our young people have started to hurt each

other and continue to hurt each other. And the numbers are getting worse and younger.

Mr. Speaker, week after week, MP Richardson pointed out that the behaviour on our roads must stop. When we talk about it . . . there are multiple levels. It's got to be education. It's got to be enforcement. We have to make changes from a legislative standpoint.

But we also have to make sure that personal accountability happens in our country. But the example has got to be set here. We can't set laws and then break them. We have to make sure that we are holding each other accountable and being transparent. And not just saying the word, meaning it. Don't talk about collaboration and then have zero collaboration over and over again. *This is what we are going to share with you* the day of. And the population thinks that everybody up here is actually trying to do what's best and then get upset if the Opposition doesn't agree blindly with everything that is put in front of them in the five seconds that we got to read it.

The reality is, not all things are great. And it's not about doom and gloom. It's the reality that people live in. If we stay on this trajectory, the population continues to decline. And as it declines, that means that the price of everything has to go up. And it continues to go up. And if you don't have a plan on how you're going to change that trajectory, then that's the case. That's where we are. And there doesn't seem to be a plan. And if there is one, we are here to hear it, [in] multiple sessions. We haven't heard it yet.

An Hon. Member: Heard what?

Hon. Ben Smith: The plan of how you're going to change the trajectory that we are on right now. Because it's not going to be the CIT that's going to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, every day another Bermudian family makes the decision to sell out of the country they helped to build, sell that house and move because they can't afford the health care and they can't afford the groceries and they can't afford the BELCO bill. And they say: *You know what? There's a better life for me somewhere outside of the country.*

It's not just our young people. It's multiples. Mr. Speaker, we have our university students coming back. And some of them are saying: *I can't actually go out at night because I don't feel safe in my community.* Does that seem like a place that they want to come back to? When you're young you want to be out. You want to be active. You want to be social. And we can't take it for granted because we can be out, be social. What's the impact on the next generation if they feel that they can't? That their lives are being threatened. They can't move around easily.

When will those things become the priority? When will we be standing here with legislation that is actually going to help impact that change? Stop talking about it. Let's actually do it. Because, Mr. Speaker, as we stand here right now . . . another accident on the

road. The country is numb. It's every day. Cars flipped over. Another bike accident. Somebody else hurt. Another one in the emergency room. Shootings happen. And it's condolences, if it is a death; if not, prayers.

Mr. Speaker, it's not good enough. You can't keep getting up here and patting yourself on the back for what you think you've accomplished. And then spend the rest of the time ticking the box of whatever it is on the checklist that you got to get done before you leave.

It's time to put the country and its people first.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier will get up and give the same speech that he's given over and over again, and pat himself on the back—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: —pat himself on the back for all of the things that he thinks he accomplished. But the population doesn't actually *feel* the things that he continues to tell them.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: It's amazing.

Hon. Ben Smith: The difference is this isn't about voting. See? That's the difference.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: You are only worrying about elections. Why don't you actually worry about the community and what they're actually dealing with? Because the truth is the voter turnout is telling you that they have turned off from politics completely.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: And they still won't vote for you.

Hon. E. David Burt: They've turned off of you.

Hon. Ben Smith: The truth of the matter is: Don't worry about the election. Worry about your population and what this looks like 5 years from now, 10 years from now and 20 years from now.

What did you build? What's left behind?

An Hon. Member: More houses.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: More houses for who to live in if our people aren't here anymore?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, as we move into this Cup Match holiday, I want us to reflect on where we are now and where we want to go as a community. And I want us to make sure that anybody in our community understands, as we have always said, you have to protect each other, protect your neighbours, look out for each other, speak up when you see things that are happening that shouldn't be happening, behave responsibly on our roads.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: But guess what? It's been falling on deaf ears to keep repeating it. Mr. Speaker, the behaviour doesn't change.

Each time we come back, more have fallen prey [since] the last time we gave one of these speeches. So, it's time for us to have an intervention. And it's the Government's responsibility to provide that intervention. Or they can sit still. And the truth is, there's a lot of silence from a lot of people who have been elected to do the job, to represent all the different communities.

Just remember, if you are silent, that means you are complicit. So, if you do not believe in what's happening right now, and you haven't spoken up, you're part of the problem.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: Or maybe they have just been sitting quiet and collecting a cheque, Mr. Speaker. That's the responsibility part that has to happen.

Everyone talks about being responsible to their constituents. But I guess all the silence means that everybody is in agreement that the education system is doing amazingly well, and the health in our country is doing amazingly well, and that more and more of our seniors are not having to go to Financial Assistance.

I guess the silence is saying that they agree with the Premier that everything is going really well because he's amazing and his Cabinet is amazing. I guess that's where the silence is coming from.

But, Mr. Speaker, there has to be a time [when] they're going to have to stand up and speak and say whether they agree with that or whether they think that things need to be different. Because more of the same will get the same results.

You might win an election. But you're winning an election with no people in the country. And if that is what you're looking for as a win, because as the population shrinks and less people are participating in elections,—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ben Smith: —you can still win an election.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: Every country has experienced birth rate decline. What is he talking about?

Hon. E. David Burt: He doesn't know what he is talking about. He is just making noise.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, and every country that has that issue is working really hard to fix the problem.

Mr. Scott Pearman: There you go.

Hon. Ben Smith: So once again, you can sit quiet and allow it to continue to move in that direction, or maybe the plan is that they're going to move down south. I don't know what that is. But they need to figure it out because the people in Bermuda who built this place who still want to stay here, they're looking for guidance on how that's going to happen.

That means leadership. That means actually telling them how you are going to go from where we are and the trajectory we are on into one that is going to move us to the country that I think everybody wants to see. Or we are just going to hear more announcements, and we are going to do more legislation that actually isn't helping anybody.

Hon. E. David Burt: Wow.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: Because, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier is honest and does go back and look through each of the things that have been approved since this session started [in] 2026, how many of those Bills have actually led to real difference in Bermudians' lives? Real ones. Because there's a difference between giving somebody a pension, and that person still not being able to keep their lights on, not being able to pay for the food that they need to have on their table. There's a difference. Yes, they struggle a tiny bit less, but they are still really struggling.

Now what we have is a population that's struggling in silence because we have a government that is more into winning elections than taking care of their people.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Deputy Premier, you're on your feet. Would you like your 20 minutes?

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would. I was packed up ready to go.

An Hon. Member: That's a lie.

Another Hon. Member: Now, come on.

The Speaker: Well, the Premier said he was the only one speaking tonight.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, that's what we thought.

Hon. E. David Burt: We just thought we were going to get: Happy Cup Match.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You know what?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I did that last time, and you tricked me.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would advise anyone, any Bermudian who is still awake and listening, go back to this morning about 10 [minutes] after 10:00 to about 20 [minutes before] 11:00 and listen to the 30 minutes of improvements and benefits that we have accomplished and given to our people over the last eight, nine years.

The Speaker: One second.
MP Famous. Are you leaving?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay, you may need [to be] in the Chair if I . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Yes. Stay around. Because there isn't anyone left in the panel of chairs.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Oh, yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suspect if I need it, Mr. Speaker . . . I don't know if I'll need it. But if I do, I know you'll give me a couple of extra minutes that I lost there that time.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said this morning when he gave that list of accomplishments, I don't know how he squeezed it in in 30 minutes. And I know he didn't get it . . . he didn't get it all. But he did say . . . he did say, and we continue to say on this side, we will not get everything right. We may not get it . . . we may not

get the things done that we want done as quick as we would like. But if the people of this country were that dissatisfied with the performance of the Progressive Labour Party, it's no way on God's living earth that they would have returned us to power three elections in a row.

An Hon. Member: And landslides elections.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And landslides at that

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Landslides at that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So, when they talk about the people in this country and they talk about the decisions that they have made, I look at the elections in which we have won.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Opposition Leader talked about young people. And he talked about bad driving. Mr. Speaker, we can make all the laws we want in this country. We can give the police all the support they want. And we have. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot control what young people decide to do, as they have done in recent times. We cannot control—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Is it their fault? Yes, it's—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Those young . . . those young . . . those young people who are shooting at one another . . . You're saying that it's the Government's fault? You're saying the bad driving is the Government's fault? We need to do something, Mr. Speaker? Really?

An Hon. Member: It's their fault.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We have increased the amount of money we have given to the police.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In large . . . large . . . I'm talking about millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. And I've sat in meetings with the Commissioner and the Premier and Cabinet colleagues. And we've told the Commissioner: *You will never, ever come to us and ask for money to do your job to look after the people of this country and will not get it from us. You will get it.* And we have given millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, increased money [has been] given to the police over and over again to assist them to do the very things in which Members opposite spoke [to].

But, Mr. Speaker, then they talk about cars turning over and people speeding. Mr. Speaker, really? You're going to put that on the Government? Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the young people, and say: *What are you doing for the young people in this country?* Mr. Speaker, we have given out more scholarships, after they cut scholarships.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They cut scholarships in their five years. We've returned it where we've given out more scholarships than any time in our history. We have free Bermuda College on top of that, Mr. Speaker. We have apprenticeship programmes that our young people are taking advantage of. We are doing what we can to encourage young people to make good citizens of themselves.

And when they talk about the young people, you will know, Mr. Speaker, because you attend events at BI [Bermuda Institute] like I do, as well as other events around this country to different schools. We have a lot of talent in this country. We have a few individuals who need some help. But we have a lot of talent in this country. And we have a lot of young people who are doing positive things in this country.

Don't put them all in one basket, Mr. Speaker, because it's not fair. We have a lot of young people who have talent. They work very hard, whether it's in school or whether it's in sports. And we, this Government, support them. And I would like to think that we could take some credit for giving them the tools so that they can enjoy life. They can make themselves better students. They can make themselves better sports people.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about unemployment. We have the lowest unemployment levels we've seen in decades in this country. And then they said it was because people are leaving

An Hon. Member: Yes, they have left.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not . . . Look, Mr. Speaker, they keep saying that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: People have been leaving this country, Mr. Speaker. I remember when I was a young boy. I had a lot of my family leave this country. A lot of them. And you do too, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people left Bermuda. But guess what? They came back. And guess what they're doing now, Mr. Speaker? They're coming back.

An Hon. Member: No, they aren't.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they are.

Mr. Speaker, I have a family member of which I will speak about, who left here six years ago to go to

the UK because they said: *Things are going to be cheaper out there. I know they will.* Mr. Speaker, he'll be back here next month because he said the groceries out there have doubled in six years. And he is not . . . It is not the *God-save-me* place that he thought it was. He'll be back here next month. He said the UK has gotten so expensive and so out of hand. They don't want to be there.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So yes, people leave Bermuda. They've been doing it for decades, Mr. Speaker. Nothing new. Nothing new at all.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about housing people. The Opposition Leader said: *Housing people? What's the sense of building all these houses? They ain't got nowhere to live.* Let me make this statement, Mr. Speaker. I announced two weeks ago that we are going to build 200 homes in the next 14 months.

An Hon. Member: There's no people. Where are they going to live?

Another Hon. Member: Yes, there's no people left.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There's no people left. So the Honourable . . . see how lost they are? They are so out of touch, Mr. Speaker. *We don't have any people left.* So, I guess I'm going to build homes, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We don't have people.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But we have 500 families on the waiting list.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We will build homes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will. And we're not just going to build 200.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Because I announced earlier today, we're starting phase 2.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And within the next 24 months, Mr. Speaker, if I have my way, we'll have 400 new homes.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, when we start filling these homes, where people are out there paying too much rent, and they're struggling just to pay that rent, those places are going to be empty. And guess what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker? Those prices are going to come down too. We build 400 homes people are going to fill . . . we will fill them up quickly. And where they're staying now, those places are going to . . . oh yes, they're going to become available. And people, if economics . . . you know how it works, Mr. Speaker, supply and demand. So, I'm looking for those prices to drop, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader can talk about gloom and doom all he wants. But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. In fact, I'll quote. He said *the economy is stagnant*.

Where is he living?

An Hon. Member: Cuckoo.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Is he living in cloud cuckoo land?

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Local economy. Local economy is stagnant.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Local economy? Are you crazy, Mr. Speaker? Listen, I, Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I own . . . I own—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I own several businesses and I have a lot of friends that have business.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's economy is booming.

An Hon. Member: For rich people.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We cannot even keep up the supply of block in this country.

An Hon. Member: For rich people.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And the Honourable Member is saying *for rich people*. I'll tell you what, you know what? Who do we encourage? What? Is there something wrong with Bermuda having wealthy people?

An Hon. Member: No, not at all.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Bermuda has wealthy people. We have Black wealthy people, too. If that's what you're insinuating, you know?

An Hon. Member: Yes, we do.

[Inaudible interjections]

[Mr. Christopher Famous, Acting Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now, but Mr. . . . Mr. Acting Speaker, you look good in that Chair. You look good. You look good in that Chair, too.

But Mr. Acting Speaker, right? They complained about all the people we have on Financial Assistance.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, when they were in power, it was almost non-existent. It was almost non-existent.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We give out over a million dollars a week for Financial Assistance.

An Hon. Member: And the number is growing.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We . . . and the number is growing.

Hon. E. David Burt: That not incorrect.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's incorrect. No, the number of support—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —the number of support is growing. We continue to do things for our people. If people are struggling, they go [to] Financial Assistance. We assist them. That's what we do. When they were in power, zero.

An Hon. Member: Here we go again.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They cut everything.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Then they talk about our young people. The first thing they did in 2012 is cut at-risk youth programmes. Cut them all. That's the type of things that they did when they were . . . And you know what? It was a lesson for people in this country.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Keep looking backwards.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It was a lesson. That five years . . . because a lot of people, especially our Progressive Labour Party people from 1998 to 2012, they only knew a Progressive Labour Party Government. But one thing the OBA showed when they were in power [was], they will cut, they won't worry about the people in this country, and they'll look after their own. That's what they'll do. They'll tell our seniors that money doesn't grow on trees, but they found \$100 million for America's Cup.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, point of order, point of order.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They found \$40 million for Cross Island—

The Acting Speaker: Will you take the point of order?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What do you mean?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member's misleading the House. Yes, again. He got me so upset I forgot what I was going to say.

[Laughter]

The Acting Speaker: So, you have no point of order?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes . . . No, he's—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He is taking up my time, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He can't even—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no, no, we're not taking up your time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Unfortunately, the Honourable Member is misleading the House to even suggest that we took care of our own. We just talked tonight on a Bill that was presented about taking care of your own.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All right. That's his point of order.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, come on now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

We know that when they were in power, who took care of who. And for 400 years, we watched them—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: For 400 years, we watched them take care of their own, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, point of order, point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Do you have an established point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is this Government who is giving tax credits to the very people that he's talking about that . . . he is saying we support it. Allshores is getting tax credits to buy back their own shares. Come on now.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, the Premier has clarified that point over and over and over.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Over and over and over.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But look, Mr. Acting Speaker, let's not forget.

Hon. E. David Burt: Tell them.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We are still fighting to try and resolve Morgan's Point. That number now has climbed to close to \$225 million. Mr. Acting Speaker, \$225 million of the taxpayers' money for Morgan's Point. And the thing is, their former Finance Minister said he would do it again.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He's speaking as if that's the only thing we're still trying to pay off. We're still trying to pay off a hospital that costs more than what they paid off at Morgan's Point.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not a point of order.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And it's still going on and carrying debt.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's not a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. [Acting] Speaker, let's talk about the airport.

An Hon. Member: Yes, let's.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let's talk about \$40 million on Cross Island—\$40 million, which we are still paying off.

An Hon. Member: Build some houses on it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Dr. Brown's investigation—\$10 million and counting. Commission of Inquiry, another million. Remember, all these things were taking place when they told our seniors that money doesn't grow on trees.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Where's the tree?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Money doesn't grow on trees.

An Hon. Member: Oh, it's the CIT.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let's remember what they've done.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, let me remind, maybe they don't get it on that side, but I tell you what we get on this side. If I walk anywhere in this country,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —people thank us for the work that we have done and continue to do every single day.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And they back it up when they come to the election polls.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Three elections in a row, landslide victories.

An Hon. Member: Landslide?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The people in this country continue to speak to us, and they continue to show them who they trust. When you talk about trust, they show us who they trust and who they don't trust.

Now, they talk about the economies and . . . and . . . What did he say?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All right, I'll get it. The economy is stagnant. Well—

An Hon. Member: The local economy.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The local economy is stagnant? Okay. The local economy is stagnant. You haven't been down on Front Street lately, Mr. Acting Speaker?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's called Brookfield. I am down on Front Street every day. I go down there . . . I see Brookfield building. I go down a little—

An Hon. Member: Brookfield?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's not local economy. That's IB, silly.

An Hon. Member: Come on, man.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Look, that's not local—

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, please have a seat.

Honourable Scott Pearman, please don't use that language.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Silly?

The Acting Speaker: Yes. You think you are too—you're smart enough to know what I meant.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you for that, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, because that's certainly unparliamentary language. You got to him before I did.

But Mr. [Acting] Speaker, who builds these buildings? When you say they're local . . . So, what did they say? I guess Southampton Princess, I guess Fairmont Southampton is not local either.

An Hon. Member: We are still waiting for that one.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Right? I suppose the massive office block that's being constructed down on the western end of Front Street, I guess that's not local either.

But it's funny because they wouldn't know it because they weren't in the House. But I remember Grant Gibbons standing up in the House and bragging about all the construction that took place in this country. And most of it was the foreigners. One minute we say: *We need foreign investment in this country.* Now we got it they are saying: *Well, what's the local econ—? That's not . . . that don't count because it's not local.* Really?

An Hon. Member: Oh, you don't like the local economy?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Really?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The fact of the matter is, is that under this Government,—
[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I know because I know a lot of people who are in the business, our people who have businesses. And guess what? All of them are busy right now. All of them are busy.

An Hon. Member: What business?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I challenge them, any local business . . . and you tell me that they're out of work. And I want to know who they are.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: There are boards on the windows on Front Street.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let me tell you something, Mr. Acting Speaker, I happen to supply a lot of the local businesses with materials for their work. And guess what? All of them are busy. And I tell you what they tell me every day. *Keep doing what you're doing. You guys are doing a fantastic job.* And we will, because no matter how much noise they make, no matter how much gloom and doom they preach, no matter how many boogeymen they pull out of their back pockets, that will

not stop us from driving this economy and looking after our people.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does anyone else wish to speak?

Mr. Speaker, you have . . . Mr. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. . . . Hold on.

The Acting Speaker: Just call me Captain.

[Pause]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: While the Premier is getting set up, I still had a minute left. Do you remember? The Speaker owed me a minute.

I'd like to wish all my fans Happy Cup Match. Thank you, Mr. [Acting] Speaker. That's all I want. And look, all these seniors get in free on Thursday and Friday. Don't forget.

An Hon. Member: Somerset!

Hon. E. David Burt: The Speaker is back.

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has started.

The Speaker: No—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You've got three minutes.

The Speaker: Well, wait, wait, let me get this sorted out.

**CORRECTION TO:
REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE: COMPLIANCE
WITH PROCUREMENT RULES, FINANCIAL
INSTRUCTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND VALUE FOR
MONEY OF COVID-19 TRAVEL AUTHORISATION,
PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION**

Hon. E. David Burt: Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, you don't have to worry about the clock, because I can assure you I will not even come close to using it.

Before I deal with the uncontrolled vitriol that was shared by the Opposition Leader earlier, Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a very important point. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise to briefly correct a serious,

factual statement or error contained in the Public Accounts Committee report that was tabled earlier today.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: That report states that on the 24th of August 2020, the Premier signed a BPMS contract which duplicated the travel authorisation system and also provides a \$2.5 million guarantee. Matters I've spoken about in this House already and have said is false.

Mr. Speaker, that statement is false. I signed a service agreement that had no financial commitment at all. That agreement contained no guarantee, created no obligation for the Government to pay any funding, and did not make the Government a guarantor of that loan. A statement from Public Accounts Committee that says that I was a guarantor of a loan when there is plenty of factual evidence of the otherwise is disappointing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, what I will say is . . . I just hope you would listen, please.

The \$2.5 million guarantee was in a separate legal instrument relating to a loan made to Interfund. It was executed appropriately 10 months later by the then Minister of Finance. In the [contemporaneous] emails, the financial records and the parliamentary record all establish that fact. The government's own records also state that the agreement I signed was correct before any binding acts were taken and that a subsequent contract was executed by the appropriate public officer.

Mr. Speaker, these are not differences of opinion. They are different documents, different dates, different legal obligations, and different signatories.

I was never invited to appear before the committee, nor was I given an opportunity to respond before the serious allegation was placed inside of a parliamentary report. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary committees rightly demand accuracy, accountability, and proper process from the government. They must also be held to those same standards.

I will shortly file a formal response supported by the relevant documentary evidence and request that the parliamentary record be corrected. I will accept legitimate criticism of my decisions, but I will not allow a demonstrably false assertion to become accepted as fact simply because it's been printed in a parliamentary report.

And I just need to make that submission at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, rather than waiting on September and rising on a matter of personal explanation, as I know the way that the media likes to treat things in this country, and it's very easy for persons to say falsehoods.

So, I rose two years ago when the report was first written by the Auditor General and said that it was

factually incorrect. That is the record of this House. Then we get the same factual incorrectness repeated by a Public Accounts Committee.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I will deal with that particular matter as well, but I need to raise that particular matter to you and make sure that it is on the record from the floor in this House.

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA, REPLY TO OBA RESPONSE

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, typically, Mr. Speaker, right before Cup Match holiday, it is usual for persons to get up and share particular greetings. Unfortunately, however, the House and the listening public, those who may still be up at 1:36 am, although I know some people may listen tomorrow, were treated to (my words) the uncontrolled vitriol of the Opposition Leader.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: And here's my view, Mr. Speaker, and it is particularly interesting because it's remarkably personal. I mean, whether it is him [or] the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that—all of them—they go after me personally as an individual. They go after me, saying the administration, all the rest, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They continue to lose. It doesn't work. It is interesting, but here's the thing, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. I am the proud son of Gerald Burt from Jubilee Road, Devonshire, a proud Bermudian, tradesman, carpenter, mason. And I'm the proud son of a proud Jamaican woman. Jamaican, yes. And here's the thing: The mix between those bloods, Mr. Speaker, gives me incredibly broad shoulders.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I have been able to handle every single thing that the Opposition has attempted to throw at me.

But I have come to accept, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Opposition Leader's hostility is just the sincerest form of political frustration. Because three consecutive election victories can be very difficult for people to process. They cannot understand how, in their version of the world, in their version of Bermuda, where everything is wrong—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Tell them.

Hon. E. David Burt: —that the people of this country continue to send the Progressive Labour Party back to this place with super majorities. They can't handle it.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they can't.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, whether or not they try to attack progress, whether or not they try to say that all is bad, whether or not they come after you personally, whatever it is that they do, here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. It's not working. And here's what they say: *Patting himself on the back*. I don't need to pat myself on the back, Mr. Speaker. We just come here and deliver for the people of Bermuda.

And here's one of the things that was said. It was quite surprising. They said there was silence from persons and they were complicit.

An Hon. Member: They are still silent.

Hon. E. David Burt: Complicit? Complicit in what today, Mr. Speaker? Complicit in what? Let's remember what we did today. We passed a Criminal Justice Reform Bill that was born out of the matters and work of which we did last week. We passed an amendment to the Cost of Living Act, objected to by that side, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —passionately fought for by the Honourable Minister who laid out the plans.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, here's what we do. So that's fine. They can say what they like. But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. The people of this country agree with us.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: They want their Government to take action. They saw what was in our election manifesto. They said they wanted to support that. They voted for that. And it is our right and responsibility to make sure that we put it into place. And so, when they say silence and complicit, silent and complicit in what?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: What is it? You understand what I'm saying?

So, it's very interesting. They go on this thing. They like . . . it's almost as though if they live in their self-repeating echo chamber of *The Royal Gazette* comments, Facebook comments, and what they discuss down at Port O Call [Restaurant].

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Rather than knocking on the doors and listening to the real things and the pain and troubles in which people are facing. Because, Mr. Speaker, that is what we deal with every week.

So, then we talk about the matters. What else came today? Whether it's health insurance reform changes or matters related to discrimination of which people are facing in this country, Mr. Speaker. So, when we sit here—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —when we sit here and talk about complicit and silence and not doing anything and not progressing, it's all nonsense, Mr. Speaker. But I get it. I get it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They are hurt badly.

Hon. E. David Burt: I get it.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. The people did not send us here to discuss his feelings about me. They sent us here to discuss the business of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And we continue to progress that business each and every single day, Mr. Speaker. Because that is the reality of the work of which we do.

And yes, this morning, Mr. Speaker, I gave a Statement and people will hear that Statement over and over and over again. Because the reality is that after nine years there are demonstrable changes in this Island. And for what we have said we were going to do, what we promised that we're going to do, and the work of which we're continuing to deliver, Mr. Speaker, it is something that is immense personal pride. But it is not personal only. It is immense pride to the over 2,000 members of the Progressive Labour Party who get to say that is what my party has accomplished in Government.

And in that exact same Statement, Mr. Speaker, I did not claim perfection because no one is perfect. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to progress. We continue to push forward. And it pains,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —pains my detractors,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, it does.

Hon. E. David Burt: —pains them immensely that I can continue to work forward and lead this Government to deliver week in and week out with accomplishments, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to have an amazing Cabinet. I am proud to have an amazing Backbench. I'm proud to have an amazing party executive. I am proud to have an amazing party, Mr. Speaker, that is able to deliver on so many things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that over the Cup Match holiday the Honourable Member gets rid of his personal frustrations towards my ability to continue to lead and deliver. Because, you know, there is only going to be four more times that we're going to face off on this particular space before I take my space to the Backbench. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that I think he would probably (it's not for me to give him political advice) . . . he would probably find a little bit more political mileage focusing on issues rather than focusing on individuals. Probably.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Whoa.

Hon. E. David Burt: Probably find a little bit more mileage than focusing on individuals, because their game plan has not worked for nine years. And I'm just saying if they want to continue it, that's on them.

CUP MATCH

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, Mr. Speaker, let me turn to what's the normal thing in which we get up and speak about these wonderful times. It is this holiday that we are approaching, Mr. Speaker. Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, people will read about this holiday, will read the messages, and persons know that I absolutely enjoy the Cup Match holiday. I enjoy the Cup Match holiday. I remember my first time attending Cup Match because, you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't like cricket. I do not like cricket. I am not a cricket fan at all. I'm a football guy. And I went—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —I went . . . I remember it was 2007 because every year I went . . . you know, I lived away for a very long time. Cup Match would happen. I would just say: *That's a long weekend, a long vacation. I'll go away. I'll take a trip.*

And I remember someone convinced me to stay for Cup Match in 2007 in St. George's, and convinced me that I should get a camp and all the rest and different things. And, Mr. Speaker, I had the most

amazing time at that Cup Match. And I remember the following year I invited so many friends who came down and there were 30-something friends from overseas who came down and enjoyed it. And it has come to be without question my favourite holiday. I enjoy the spirit. I enjoy the camaraderie. I enjoy it.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for constituency 11 had said, that it is this Progressive Labour Party that made sure we decolonised Cup Match.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: And that's something that is important because my comment that will be read inside the Cup Match booklet (which I'll preview here) is: There'll be many persons in this country that will never actually know that those holidays were not called Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: That they were called Cup Match Day and Somers Day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: There are many people who will not know that we made sure that we made those changes so we can tie through for the reason that we had.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's important that the record reflect and history continues to be told that that holiday was not one that was given. That was a holiday that was taken. That was for those who were emancipated who said: *We are not going to work. We are going to celebrate our emancipation and force the government finally to relent many years afterwards to give a particular holiday.* But it was not until 1998 that the Progressive Labour Party was elected that that holiday was changed to the actual title of what it celebrates: Emancipation Day.

And then at the urging of the Honourable Member for constitution 11 in 2018 or 2019, the second day of Cup Match was changed to Mary Prince Day in honour of our National Hero, and someone who was very well tied to the abolition movement and the emancipation of slaves inside of the British territories, Mr. Speaker.

So, we have a special and unique holiday that we must celebrate and continue to tell the story of why. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that what that recognises is activism. It's activism in our communities. It's activism here.

Now, here's what I'll say, Mr. Speaker . . . Ah, no, I'm not going to go down that road. You know, leave it alone right now. Not today.

The activism of which we see that led to this holiday is the activism which we need inside of our

communities. Because we saw that we did work today on justice. We saw that we worked on discrimination. We saw we did work today on health care. We saw we did work. But the reality is that these things have to be picked up and carried, not just by the politicians here, not just by the members of our parties, but the everyday citizens to make sure they play their parts in our democracy as well, Mr. Speaker.

Because when we pass laws, and if there are matters related to discrimination, if there are matters related to challenges, if there are challenges of which you are facing, then you have to speak up. You have to say something. You have to make sure that you hold the persons accountable. You have to make sure that you say MP this, MP that and all the rest. We get those messages to respond because that's how this holiday started. It started by people taking matters into their own hands. That is the power of community and the power of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And it's impressive.

So, this year, somehow, Mr. Speaker, without inviting anyone, I've managed to outdo what happened in 2008, or what is going to happen. My wife and I are welcoming over 50 visitors to the Island for this holiday. Someone had joked and said that I should start my own tourism firm or all the rest. But people want to come to Bermuda.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they do.

Hon. E. David Burt: People want to come to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker. They enjoy when they come here. They bring their friends. Some people have been to Cup Match three and four times and are bringing like 10 friends and saying: *It is the best time. You have to come and experience it.*

And so, we have something really special in this country. And I know that we as human beings have a propensity to focus on the negative. But at least at some point in time, recognise that there are some rays of sunshine that exist inside of our community, Mr. Speaker. They're raised inside of our sunshine.

When we see students graduating from the CedarBridge or The Berkeley Institute, we see the rays of sunshine. We see persons graduate from Bermuda College on College Promise. We see those rays of sunshine where it goes to the internship programmes down in the young people, whether ABIR or BILTIR or ABIC and all the rest who are doing their work, who are playing their part, who are doing their items, and all the rest, Mr. Speaker. We see those rays of sunshine in our future. It is our responsibility to make sure that we support them.

And here's the one thing that you will get from this Government, Mr. Speaker. You will get reality. You will understand that we will support those who are doing well because the reality is that there is a lot to celebrate.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope, wish and pray for a safe holiday for all. I do know that

without question, the security services, everyone will be out in force, making sure to make sure everyone is safe. But it's also a matter of personal responsibility. It is very simple. As the Honourable Junior Minister said earlier, if you're going to be intoxicated, do not get behind the wheel. Please make sure . . . find a way, catch a friend, do something else, please. It is important. The one thing that we do not wish is to have additional tragedy on this particular holiday.

And please recognise and know with the additional support, funding and money that we've given to the Bermuda Police Service and the work that they will be there to make sure to keep us safe as possible.

So, I wish everyone a very happy Emancipation Day, a very happy Mary Prince Day, a very happy Cup Match holiday. And of course, Mr. Speaker, the record will reflect that should Somerset keep the Cup, I would have never—

The Speaker: But they will.

Hon. E. David Burt: —I would have never in my time as Premier have to ever have given that Cup to the Blue and Blue side. With that, have a happy Cup Match, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

CUP MATCH

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Members, it's been quite a long day, probably one of the longest sessions we've had in quite a while. So, I want to thank you all for your participation today.

And I'm going to just take a couple of minutes to comment on where the Premier almost wrapped up on a reference to the Emancipation holiday. And as many in this room would know, we in the Somerset and the friends of Somerset have been doing our Emancipation walk, Cup Match walk prior to Cup Match. We'll be doing it again this year, the weekend before Cup Match. And we invite you all to come out and learn a little bit more the history of Emancipation and Cup Match.

Premier, you talked about how we were not *given*, we *took* the holiday. We claimed it as a 113 year protest. It was 113 years of us taking a holiday, taking the day before we got it as an official holiday. And we speak to all of that. So, you can come out next Tuesday night. We'll be doing an Emancipation topic at Somerset Cricket Club. The time for it has gone away from me right now, but it's been advertised.

And then the Saturday before we're doing the walk. So, feel free to come out throughout the Island. Even our St. George's fans come up and enjoy it. And so, we invite everybody from one end to the other end to come up and enjoy it.

With that, as been said already, we are on the best holiday of the year for Bermuda. We encourage as

many people who come on our shores during this time to enjoy the holiday with us as Bermudians. But we also encourage anyone who comes, whether it's local or foreign visitors, that this is a holiday we want everybody to be safe. We want us to enjoy the fun. We enjoy the history. Enjoy the camaraderie that it brings. But we also want us to remember that it takes a little bit of caution on each of us to protect not only ourselves, but those around us. Remember, our families don't want to see us harm ourselves in any way or us to harm anyone else.

So, as has been said already, if you are enjoying the liquid libations and other things, do not, do not get behind the wheel of a car or a boat because there's a lot of activity on the water during the time as well. And we want to keep our water as safe as our roads are. So, enjoy the holiday. Remember the reason for it and the history of it as you enjoy the victory that Somerset will have once again.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: And with that, I now stand and . . . and MP Famous, you are supporting that victory for Somerset in your Blue and Blue. Thank you very much. Even MP Famous is acknowledging that Somerset will have victory this year.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: And with those words, we'll stand adjourned until the 4th of September. Members, have a good holiday season and a good time away from here. Be prepared to come back for a full session in September.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: With that, the House now stands adjourned.

[At 1:52 am, [Saturday, 18 July 2026] the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 4 September 2026.]

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